2006

Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women

Antoinette Michelle Rogers
Virginia Commonwealth University

FACTORS LEADING TO SUCCESSFUL ATTAINMENT OF DOCTORAL DEGREES IN EDUCATION BY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Antoinette Michelle Rogers
B.S., Early Childhood Education, Hampton University, 1991
M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1999

Director: Diane Johnson Simon, Ph.D.
Professor and Associate Dean
School of Education

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
December, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God be the glory, great things He hath done. I gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement given by my family, friends and mentors. You have helped me every step of the way.

I dedicate this dissertation in loving memory and in honor of all those who have inspired me throughout my life, especially during my educational career. To my father, Anthony W. Rogers, thank you for your unwavering support, love and belief in me. To my mother, Effie Eure Rogers, and my dear friend, Cathy L. Bonner, I know you are smiling down on me. You have been with me in spirit and for that I am grateful and truly blessed.

To my dissertation advisor, Dr. Diane J. Simon, and committee members, Dr. Susan D. Leone, Dr. Michael D. Davis, Dr. Daisy F. Reed, Dr. Gerald R. Burton, and Dr. Micah L. McCreary, your wise counsel, patience and scholarly expertise have helped me learn and grow tremendously during this process. Thank you.

Dr. Gary Sarkozi and Mr. Yonathan Negash, I could not have conducted the videoconference interviews without you. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

To the study participants, without you this would not have been possible. Thank you for your willingness to share and your motivation.

Dr. Lorraine M. Rand, your friendship and professionalism has meant so much.

Mrs. June Jones, Ms. Stephaney Foster, Mrs. Julia Hughey, Dr. Cheryl Adeyemi, Dr. Marveta Ryan-Sams and Mrs. Addie Hodges, your unselfish acts of kindness have sustained me throughout my doctoral journey.

To Mrs. Carole Harwell, formatter extraordinaire, your patience, professionalism and diligence are unparalleled. Ms. Patricia Willard, thanks for looking out for me.

Dr. James H. Harris and the Second Baptist Church family, I appreciate your prayers and support.

Thank you to the faculty and staff of the College of Education, Ashland University. My experience as a 2005 Summer Dissertation Fellow was awesome and instrumental in my success.

Funding for this study was generously provided by a grant from the Virginia Commonwealth University Graduate School Research Grant Program

Ubuntu—I am, because we are.
African Proverb

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Page

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

FACTORS LEADING TO SUCCESSFUL ATTAINMENT OF DOCTORAL DEGREES IN EDUCATION BY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

By Antoinette Michelle Rogers, M.Ed., Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Major Director: Diane J. Simon, Ph.D., Associate Dean, School of Education

This qualitative research study determined what factors influenced or hindered the successes of eight African American women who earned doctorates in the field of Education within the past 10 years. The researcher gathered and shared the stories of African American women doctoral degree completers in their own words. Interviews were conducted using the Polycom H.323 videoconferencing system in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The participants in this study collectively attributed more than 15 factors to helping them complete a doctoral program. Some of the success factors cited include self-determination, knowledge of self and purpose for earning a doctorate, spirituality, development of response and navigational skills, full-time doctoral matriculation and dedicated dissertation writing time. Social support provided by family members, colleagues, and university faculty was determined to be a major factor. Financial support

in the form of fellowships, grants, assistantships and student loans was also cited. Institutional factors such as a warm, supportive environment and ease of transition to graduate school also played a role in the women's successes.

Likewise, approximately 15 factors were counted as hindrances or obstacles. Some of the hindrances included poor relationships with advisors, lack of financial aid, racism, isolation as a minority student, time encumbrances associated with assistantship duties, family responsibilities and personal illness. Although the number of hindrances and obstacles were nearly equal to success factors, participants overcame these barriers and successfully earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Recommendations for doctoral students, advisors and university administrators have implications for changes in higher education policy and practice. African American women doctoral students must be knowledgeable about themselves and possess a clear understanding of their purpose for seeking a doctorate. This knowledge should help guide decision-making and shape a plan of action for successful doctoral program completion.

Based upon the results of this study, doctoral advisors and university administrators should commit to fostering success for African American doctoral students by offering academic, financial and social support, as well as establishing a diverse learning environment with a critical mass of faculty and students of color, particularly African Americans.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the proposed study by introducing the topics of doctoral education and educational attainment for women and minorities. The rationale for investigating factors leading to doctoral degree attainment for African American women in Education will be highlighted in the statement of the problem. Theoretical frameworks, research design, methods and definitions of terms for the study are also introduced.

Doctoral education is often considered the pinnacle of the American higher education system. Since the awarding of the first Doctor of Philosophy degree in the late 1800s, the degree has become the highest academic honor. The field of research on the doctoral degree process continues to grow. However, a considerable amount of research available on doctorate completion is related to aspects of financing graduate education (Gillingham, Seneca & Taussig, 1991). Additional research is needed in other areas of doctoral education. Doctoral degree attainment by women and minorities are two such areas (Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], 2004; Gill & Showell, 1991; Kerlins, 1997; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000).

The educational horizon in the United States has widened and become more accessible to citizens who were once denied educational privilege. Women and African Americans are two groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, especially at the doctorate level (Collins, 2001; Nettles, 1990; Nettles, Perna & Freeman, 1999). Consequently, there have been fewer studies on these two groups, particularly related to doctoral degree attainment. This study specifically aims to add to the body of literature on African American women and their experiences during the doctoral degree process. Examination and understanding of the experiences of minority or underrepresented groups fosters a more pluralistic vision that promotes awareness of the many viewpoints of citizens of our ever changing, culturally-diverse world. The spectrum of diversity should ideally be reflected in every aspect of life, including education. Role models, mentors and teachers should be persons from every ethnicity. African American women must be included. In order to gain a clear perspective of African American women's doctoral experiences, it is necessary to look at educational access as well as the evolution of doctoral education and studies on the topic.

Through the years, the amount of research on doctoral education has been impacted by supply and demand in academia as well as coinciding world events. In the early 1900s, during the infancy of widespread doctoral studies in this country, many American students traveled to Europe to study. Upon their return, many developed doctoral programs at American colleges and universities (Carnegie Foundation, 2001). In the mid- 1940s and 1950s, after World War II, there was an increase in the number of

Americans pursuing graduate education. In the 1960s, the number of doctorates awarded annually by U.S. universities nearly tripled (Bowen & Rudestine, 1992).

Prior to 1992, there had been a very limited number of systematic studies conducted on doctoral education (Bowen & Rudestine, 1992). Before the 1990s, studies on graduate education in the humanities and social sciences were sparse. Relative to the body of literature on graduate education, there were relatively few studies on women and the graduate school process. The National Science Foundation (1998) advocated studies to gather data on the context of graduate school experiences of women, minorities and other underrepresented groups in doctoral education in order to achieve both diversity and parity in the higher education arena.

While there have been some studies related to women's pursuit of the doctorate, this body of research is largely centered on gender, age, areas of study, family influence and sources of support as factors influencing time to doctoral degree completion. Various forms of social and financial support are recurring themes in findings related to doctoral degree attainment for women (Kerlins, 1997). Provision of academic and social support such as program advising, mentoring, and networking through "sister circles" is the basis for the formation of several groups aimed at fostering terminal degree completion for women. Lenz (1997) believes that widespread awareness of the possible impact that strong support networks could have on women's doctoral degree completion rates is essential. Although women outnumber men in doctoral degree completion in Education, they are the gender minority in overall doctoral degree attainment.

In addition to striving for educational parity for women, concern for the low participation rate of ethnic minorities in the doctoral degree process also calls for further study. Factors that facilitate or hinder doctoral degree production for students from underrepresented groups need to be explored. Studies by Clewell (1987) and the CGS (2004) report that minority groups, particularly Blacks and Hispanics, are greatly underrepresented in graduate and professional schools. The underrepresentation of persons from these minority groups in doctoral programs means that the number of program completers is significantly lower than that of Caucasian doctoral program completers. This must be addressed if equality of educational opportunity and professional achievement are to occur for all Americans. Furthermore, only a few studies have been conducted on minorities in post baccalaureate settings.

Even with increases over time, the relatively low percentage of African American doctoral degree recipients requires attention. In 1975 only 3.8% of the doctorates earned in America were awarded to Black Americans (Yates & Mills, 2004). More than 10 years later, the doctorate completion rate for Blacks still hovered around 3% (Nettles, 1990; Nettles et al., 1999). The number of doctoral degrees awarded to African Americans increased 8.6% over the 5-year period from 1992 to 1997 (Hamilton, 2001). During the 2000-2001 academic year, 40,744 doctorates were awarded in the United States. Of those, 26,435 were awarded to U.S. citizens; 1,604 or 6% of the degrees went to African Americans. Among this group, women earned 65% of the degrees compared to the 35% earned by men. Despite this progress, that has been protracted, the need to

eliminate obstacles to doctoral degree pursuit and attainment among Blacks is evident (Nettles et al., 1999; Whisenton, 1989).

Overview of the Study

The preponderance of women on the doctoral level in Education and the lack of African American doctoral program completers, in comparison with doctoral degree completers of other ethnicities in general, prompted the study of African American women who have decided to pursue and successfully obtain terminal degrees. African American women earning degrees in the field of Education have the highest doctoral degree completion rate. Therefore, it is reasonable to determine what influenced and/or hindered terminal degree completion for African American women in this academic field. This information would be pertinent to determining factors that may help in increasing terminal degree completion for women and other minorities in Education, as well as other academic disciplines.

A qualitative case study approach enabled participants to offer detailed thoughts through multiple interviews. This study gave voice to these scholars and provides information concerning factors that influenced and /or hindered them during their educational process. Existing literature from previous studies on the various aspects of the doctoral degree process, experiences of women in academia, and minority doctoral students were used to provide a context.

Overview of the Literature

In order to provide clarity of context for this study of African American women doctoral degree completers in Education, it was appropriate to examine related studies including those of women and minority doctorates and factors influencing doctoral program completion in general. These studies were in the areas of gender, age, race and financial aid, as related to persistence and time to degree.

Gender equity issues, childbearing, and family responsibilities are often seen as factors that influence doctoral degree attainment and professional advancement for women (Lewis 2000; Maher, Ford & Thompson, 2004; Watkins, Herrin & McDonald, 1998). Wolf-Wendel (1998) found that for both Hispanic and African American women, the gender and racial composition of an academic institution are factors associated with doctorate productivity.

Jones (2001) explored the current state of affairs for African Americans from various student and faculty perspectives. Students, faculty and administrators offered insight based on the student involvement, persistence and institutional fit theories of Astin (1984); Tinto (1993) and others. This body of literature, largely based in theory, was very insightful in sharing selected accounts of the personal experiences of African American doctoral students or program completers. Data were collected from those currently matriculated and those who have finished the doctoral degree process.

The empirical research of Millett and Nettles (2000) provides data concerning race, sex, discipline, mentoring and the effect of each on research productivity and the overall doctoral experience. Findings from this study clearly support earlier findings

concerning the low numbers of African Americans in terminal degree programs. However, it is strictly quantitative, not qualitative. Additional qualitative studies that address the factors of race, sex, academic discipline, mentoring and the overall doctoral experience are needed.

The work of Green and Scott (2003) is qualitative and provides rich reflections from African Americans, who have obtained doctorates, and others who are currently in process. Although each writer provides a vivid description of the doctoral degree process, some factors such as student age, doctoral program requirements, financial aid, campus climate and experiences are mentioned but not discussed in great detail. Other factors such as mentoring, advising, and spirituality are repeatedly found throughout the literature.

Rationale for the Study

Much of the existing literature on African Americans in higher education focuses on undergraduate students. Green and Scott (2003) asserted that the Doctor of Philosophy degree is a process, not a product. Therefore, in order to increase advanced degree completion rates of African Americans, there is a critical need to investigate the process in order to inform current and prospective students, as well as doctoral advisors and program administrators so that they may use results to implement policies and practices that foster successful doctoral program completion. Though limited in number, many of the studies that do pertain to African American graduate students are comparative studies that examine differences among African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students. Many are institution-specific in scope. Furthermore, data for these

studies were collected during students' matriculation. This study adds to the literature on African Americans and the doctoral degree process by presenting data from doctoral degree completers who persisted in attaining their degrees.

Gill and Showell (1991) called for additional research on the career goals, paths to advancement, factors for success, and motivators for African American women, who overcome obstacles and barriers to achieve. The results of this study shed light on the paths taken by African American women who have successfully completed the doctoral degree process. Simpson (2003) asserted that increasing awareness of the academic and social experiences of ethnic minority graduate students, and the factors that positively influence these experiences, is essential if increasing representation and education attainment are goals.

Tobin (1981) and Jackson (2003) pointed out that many studies related to African American women have been limited in scope. The studies focused on women, some of whom happened to be African American. Other research examined African Americans as a group, without in-depth analysis of each gender group. In examining the experiences of this group, African American women's struggles have been largely overlooked. Consequently, the voice of African American women as a double minority group is often muted or silenced (Howard-Hamilton, 2004; Myers, 2002). Schwartz (2003) stressed that the double dilemma of being Black and female in America is a persistent burden, even in graduate school. It is necessary to further investigate the educational experiences of African American women in order to determine how this burden is felt and how it can be lifted.

Hinton-Johnson (2003) echoed this sentiment and powerfully asserted that studies on Blacks in higher education often concentrate on the negative experiences of students of color. There are almost no studies that focus on the successful Black students who earn advanced degrees. Furthermore, there is very little formal discussion about what African-American students themselves believe contribute to their academic success.

By way of participant reflection, this study chronicled the experiences of African American women who have successfully completed doctoral programs in Education at various institutions within the past 10 years. Roughly 59% of all doctorates awarded to African Americans are in Education (National Opinion Research Center, 2002). Black women received more than half of them (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Therefore, it was logical to engage in dialogue with African American women scholars in this area in order to identify factors contributing to their success.

Statement of the Problem

Despite gains in educational access and attainment, the percentage of African American doctorate recipients is small. Moreover, the paucity of research on African American women, the group earning the most doctorates among recipients from underrepresented groups, signals the need for investigation. The purpose of this study was to determine what factors influence or hinder the success of African American women who chose to pursue and ultimately complete doctoral studies in Education.

Theoretical Framework

Silverman (2001, p. 23) acknowledges the usefulness of a theoretical framework by stating that theory provides a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized. Bryant (2004) supports the use of theory as a heuristic device to examine and interpret qualitative data. Tinto's *Conceptual Model of Doctoral Persistence* (1993) (Appendix A) and Nettles' *Model of Factors Related to Minority Students' Experiences and Outcomes in Doctoral Programs* (1990) (Appendix B) were used as frameworks for this study. Both models contain variables that have been linked to doctoral education persistence for African American women.

Tinto (1993) developed a theory of doctoral education persistence that is modeled after his model of undergraduate persistence, which states that persistence is the function of students' pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, institutional experiences, both social and academic integration and time. *The Doctoral Education Persistence Theory* suggests that student program completion is a function of students' personal attributes, entry orientations to institutions, institutional experiences, academic and social integration and research experiences.

Doctoral degree matriculants are members of several communities that influence persistence and often intersect with each another. These groups include a specific degree program within an institution, and family, work and society outside of the university. Engagement as an active member of a program/department is critical for socialization. For graduate students, socialization encompasses integration into the academic setting in

both the social and academic domains. This integration is key to progression along the path to the doctorate.

The extent of one's involvement in faculty and student communities within an academic setting depends upon whether or not the student is enrolled full-time or part-time. Tinto (1993) reported that enrollment status is frequently dependent upon financial resources, work and family responsibilities, and commitments associated with everyday life. Membership in multiple communities inherently introduces variables that may influence each other, an individual's persistence and ultimately doctoral degree attainment (Tinto, 1993).

For this reason, it is necessary to conduct qualitative research that will enable participants to articulate influential variables and will help higher education researchers generate hypotheses for future study. The present study gathered this information as participants reflected upon their doctoral study experiences during the three stages of doctoral education persistence. These stages are: (a) transition and adjustment; (b) attaining candidacy/development of competence; (c) research completion (Tinto, 1993). Within each stage of matriculation there are variable domains related to participants' attributes and educational, institutional, and research experiences. Interview questions were developed using the variable domains. Questions were used to probe participants' educational experiences, financial status during matriculation, goals, and relationships.

Nettles' *Model of Factors Related to Minority Student Experiences and Outcomes* (1990) was used as a theoretical framework. The model has five domains related to students' background characteristics; undergraduate education; transition experiences

between undergraduate and graduate school; graduate school experiences; and doctoral program outcomes.

Unlike the Tinto (1993) model, Nettles' (1990) model articulates variables that are more likely to impact minority students during various stages of matriculation. Specifically, these are gender, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Nettles (1990) found that female doctoral students felt discrimination more than males. He also found that Black students with lower socioeconomic status took more time off between undergraduate and graduate school, which impacted ease of transition to doctoral study, financial aid, and overall doctoral experiences. Racial discrimination was also included as a variable that may affect one's graduate school experiences.

Nettles (1990) posits that a student's background and undergraduate preparation have a cumulative effect on each subsequent category or domain. Therefore, it is important to investigate how minority students' undergraduate training, transition experiences, and graduate school experiences influence doctoral degree attainment. In addition to probing educational experiences, goals and relationships as espoused by Tinto (1993), the interview protocol for this study included questions about each participant's family educational background, work history, financial status, personal beliefs and doctoral program satisfaction.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What experiences and/or factors contributed to successful doctoral program completion of African-American women in the field of Education?

2. What events and/or factors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion for African-American women in the field of Education?

Design and Methods

An emergent, case study design was used for this study. This design allowed the researcher to respond to data provided by information-rich participants. The emergent design called for flexibility. As data were collected, research decisions were made based on participants' responses. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), as the researcher and participants interacted, the direction of the study was determined. The qualitative study was ethnographic in nature in that it examined the doctoral degree process from an insider's or emic perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). A purposeful sample was selected. Purposeful sampling allowed individuals who met specific criteria and were informative to be selected as participants. A researcher-designed questionnaire served as the initial instrument for data collection. Participants were chosen based upon questionnaire responses, year in which degree was awarded, and geographical location. During the course of fieldwork, computer-based, real time videoconference interviews of participants was the mode of subsequent data collection. Guiding questions were posed in order to prompt discussion of critical incidents that influenced participants' doctoral experiences and degree completion. Data were recorded using video and audiotape recorders and handwritten notes. Member checking was used to enhance response validity.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used as descriptors for this study.

All But Dissertation (ABD). Persons who have completed all coursework and doctoral program requirements except the written and oral defense of the dissertation.

Black/African Americans. Persons not of Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or Native American origin; having origins in any of the Black racial groups in Africa (U.S. Office of Budget and Management & U.S. Census Bureau, 2001) The terms Black, Black American and African American were used interchangeably throughout this study to reflect terminology used in previous research.

Constant comparison method. A qualitative technique in which a researcher carefully examines data in order to identify distinctive characteristics among topics, categories, or patterns by noting similarities and differences (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

Critical incidents. Positive or negative events that influenced a participant's doctoral experience.

Doctoral students. Those students who are currently pursuing either the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree.

Doctoral degree completers. Those students who have successfully completed all requirements for either the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. This term will be used interchangeably with the term doctoral degree recipients.

Doctoral/Research-Universities Extensive. Institutions that typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs and are committed to graduate education through the doctorate. Fifty or more doctoral degrees are awarded per year across at least 15 disciplines (Carnegie Foundation, 2005).

Doctoral/Research-Universities Intensive. Institutions that typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs and are committed to graduate education through the doctorate. They award at least 10 doctoral degrees per year across three or more disciplines, or at least 20 doctoral degrees per year overall (Carnegie Foundation, 2005).

Education. Instructional programs that focus on the general theory and practice of learning and teaching; the basic principles of educational psychology; the art of teaching; the planning and administration of educational activities; school safety and health issues; and the social foundations of education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Hispanic/Latino. Persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American descent (U. S. Office of Budget and Management & U. S. Census Bureau, 2001). The terms Hispanic and Latino have been used interchangeably to reflect the terminology used in previous research.

Member checking. Also known as participant validation, this process allows collected data to be reviewed and modified for accuracy by participants.

Minority. Any person from an underrepresented ethnic group such as African American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander. The terms minority and underrepresented were used synonymously for the scope of this study.

Peer debriefer. A peer, not associated with the study, who serves as a critical reviewer of research decisions and procedure.

Persistence. The motivation to continue pursuit of an academic degree.

Success. Completion of all requirements in fulfillment of a doctoral degree program.

Underrepresented groups. Ethnic minority groups with low postsecondary enrollment rates.

Time to Degree (TTD). The time a student actually takes to obtain a degree from the start of an academic program (Gillingham et al., 1991).

Summary

The field of research on the doctoral degree attainment process continues to grow. However, more research is needed on doctoral degree attainment for minorities and women. In contrast to the total number of doctorates awarded in the United States annually, African Americans comprise a small percentage of doctorate recipients. Likewise, women trail men in overall doctoral degree completion except in one discipline—Education. In the field of Education, African American women earn the most doctorates. The purpose of this study was to determine factors that led to successful doctoral degree attainment in education for eight African American women.

Chapter 1 provided overviews of the study and relevant literature. The rationale for the study was presented along with the statement of the problem. Nettles' *Conceptual Model of Factors Related to Minority Students' Experiences and Outcomes in Doctoral Programs* (1990), and Tinto's *Model of Doctoral Persistence* (1993) were introduced as

theoretical frameworks. An emergent design was outlined. The investigation used a case study approach. Definitions were given for key terms used throughout the study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature provides a historical context and summarizes research that has been conducted on factors related to doctoral degree completion for women, minority students, as well as doctoral students in general. A broad overview of educational access on all levels for women and minorities, in particular, is given to provide a better sense of their status in the American educational arena. This chapter concludes with a specific discussion of doctoral degree attainment for African American women, which supports the background and rationale for this study.

Historical Overview

Advanced Degree Attainment for Women

Until the 19th century, it was rare for women to have opportunities for higher education. Initially, higher education for women came about through the establishment of academies, seminaries, finishing schools, and women's colleges. These institutions began in the mid-18th century and flourished in the decades following the American Revolution (Solomon, 1985). Women's schools were single-sex until Oberlin College in Ohio enrolled four women in the first coeducational program in 1837 (Rudolph, 1990). Oberlin went on to make history as the first American college to award undergraduate degrees to women and African Americans (Oberlin College, 2005). Boston University

awarded the first Ph.D. to a woman, Helen Magill, 40 years after women were first admitted to pursue undergraduate studies (Solomon, 1985).

The attainment of the doctorate by women has been reflective of societal changes that have occurred through the years. As the women's equal rights movement gained momentum, the number of doctorates for women began to increase. At the beginning of the 1900s, 228 women had received doctorates compared to 2,372 men (Bowen & Rudestine, 1992). The rate of attainment of the doctorate continued to increase during the 20th century. In 1965, 1,760 women earned doctorates from American colleges and universities. In 1995, 16,333 women earned doctorates from American colleges and universities (Nerad & Cerny, 1999). This was an increase of more than 800% compared to the 73% increase for male doctoral degree recipients during the same time period. Between 1976 and 1985, the number of Black women receiving doctorates increased from 442 to 593 (Touchton & Davis, 1991). Despite the increase, graduate women of all ethnicities still trail men in overall doctoral degree completion with exception in one area of study—Education.

Over a 20-year period between 1975 and 1995, the percentage of women earning either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Education jumped from 31% to 64% (Nerad & Cerny, 1999). Presently, this is still the case, as women outnumber men in doctoral degree completion in the field of Education. Determining why women in Education are successful in doctoral degree attainment will elucidate strategies and practices that can be implemented to possibly achieve similar success in other areas of study.

Educational Access for African Americans

Acknowledging America's history of enslavement and oppression of African Americans is essential to the discussion of that ethnic group's subsequent educational access and opportunities in the United States. During the antebellum period of American history, slaves lived in a society where literacy was forbidden by law and was a symbol that contradicted their status. African Americans emerged from slavery with a strong desire to learn to read and write. Literacy and formal education were viewed as means to liberation and freedom as citizens (Anderson, 1988). As theorized by Durkheim (1956), the collective conscience of African Americans provided a belief system in education as a means for existence, empowerment and uplift. The hard-won right of citizenship for Blacks, which was guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, was eventually reflected in gradual access to basic schooling. The marginalization of Blacks can be traced to the first Black college graduate. Harvard College, the nation's oldest institution of higher learning was founded in 1636, yet Alexander Twilight, the first Black college graduate, did not graduate from Middlebury College until 1823, nearly 200 years later (African American Registry, 2004). Forty more years passed before the first Black woman, Mary Jane Patterson, earned a comparable 4-year baccalaureate degree from Oberlin College in 1862 (Smith, 2003). Prior to the Civil War, only about 40 Blacks in the United States had earned a college degree (Cross & Slater, 2000).

Following the abolition of slavery, the founding of seminaries, trade and normal schools, which evolved into Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), was

significant. This is one in a series of events that facilitated educational access and empowerment for more Blacks. Subsequent opportunities for education were made possible with the 1865 formation of the Freedmen's Bureau, which participated in the establishment of over 4,000 schools for Blacks; and the 1890 passage of the Second Morrill Act, federal legislation which established land-grant institutions for Blacks (Anderson, 1988)..

In terms of advanced studies, barriers to academic opportunity such as institutional racism and economic disparity were apparent as well (Jackson, 2001). The first American graduate school was founded in 1847 at Yale University. James Whiton, a Caucasian, became the country's first Doctor of Philosophy in 1861 (University Microfilm ProQuest, 2004). Fifteen years passed before the first Black, Edward A. Bouchet, earned a doctorate in Physics from the same institution (Mickens, 1978). Forty-five years later, three women earned the distinction of becoming the first Black female Ph.D. degree recipients.

Collins (2001) declares that the 20th century introduced a new breed of Black women to the academy who desired to be scholars, leaders of their race, and builders of their communities. In 1921, Eva B. Dykes, Sadie T. Mossell Alexander and Georgianna R. Simpson became the first three Black American women to earn the Ph.D. degree. Dykes' area of study was English, Alexander's was Economics, and Simpson's was German (Smith, 2003; Solomon, 1985).

The first African Americans to earn doctorates in Education (Ed.D.) were Charles H. Thompson, from the University of Chicago in 1925, and Althea Washington, who earned the same degree from the Ohio State University in 1928 (Smith, 2003).

Access to graduate education for Blacks was limited. Atlanta University led the way as the first historically black college to establish a graduate school (Clark Atlanta University, 2005). However, only a few HBCUs, such as Howard University in Washington, DC, and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN, had graduate and professional schools (Anderson, 1988). *De jure* segregation in the South was legalized by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1892 (Jackson, 2001). This ruling set the precedent for legalized "separate but equal" facilities and institutions (Wormser, 2002). Southern states did not admit Black Americans to enroll in graduate and professional schools. Segregation prevented Black Americans from attending white-only institutions that offered doctoral degree programs.

Consequently, Blacks who pursued advanced studies did so either at one of a few Black institutions or in other parts of the country. Southern states offered to pay for Black students to enroll at integrated institutions in the North and Midwest, rather than admit them to white-only schools in the South (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] Legal Defense Fund, 2004). Limited access to graduate and professional study resulted in limited doctoral degree production. The problem of underrepresentation of African American terminal degree holders has always existed and been rooted in limited accessibility due to educational and social policy.

In 1936, Charles Hamilton Houston, a prominent Black attorney and Special Counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), challenged the "separate but equal" practices of the American higher education system with the litigation of *Gaines v. Canada*. The case argued the equality of educational opportunities for Blacks and Whites (Library of Congress, 2004). Lloyd Gaines, a college graduate, was denied admission to law school at the University of Missouri because he was Black (Wormser, 2002). Missouri, like other segregated states, including Virginia, did not admit Black students to its universities. However, Missouri, offered to send Black students out of state. Houston maintained that educational opportunities were separate but not equal. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all states were obligated to provide opportunities for professional education to Blacks (National Park Service, 2005). This landmark decision meant that states had to establish schools for Blacks that were equal to those for Whites or admit Black students in existing universities. This decision was the first of several that culminated with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Ultimately, greater opportunities for access to higher education and doctoral programs have been gained.

Throughout the remainder of 20th century, other historical events changed the course of American education. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court upheld that segregated public schools were unequal in terms of education for Blacks and Whites. Ten years later, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* became a landmark ruling that outlawed segregation of public facilities and institutions, including public colleges and universities (U.S. Federal Government, 2004).

As a result of this legislation, Blacks obtained increased access to graduate schools and doctorate-granting institutions to which they had been denied admission in the past. In the years following this legislation, the number of baccalaureate and graduate degrees awarded to Blacks increased.

Despite a drop in overall degree completion for Americans in general during the 1980s, African American degree attainment has moved in a positive direction. Overall, American college enrollment has increased by more than 25% during the past two decades. Minority enrollment has increased by 122% over the past 20 years, up from nearly 2 million in 1980-1981 to 4.3 million in 2000-2001 (American Council on Education, 2003). Initially, this gives rise to hope for all to achieve equity in educational access to postsecondary studies. However, upon closer examination, it is clear that both undergraduate and graduate enrollment rates for African Americans still lag behind those of their Caucasian counterparts (American Council on Education, 2003).

Doctorate Production

The underrepresentation of African Americans in all facets of higher education is reflected in various points in the educational pipeline, a term coined by Astin (1982) when referring to the entry, matriculation and exit from the educational system. In order to appreciate the statistics related to attainment of the doctorate by African American women, it is necessary to examine the educational pipeline at all points. From undergraduates to the professoriate, African Americans represent a small percentage of academia. As members of the academy, Black professors comprise only 5% of the American professoriate (Fields, 2000).

Although African American college student enrollment has increased steadily during the past 30 years, the difference is 1.9%. African Americans make up only 11.4% of the total college student population compared to 68% which are Caucasian, non-Hispanic students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Similarly, 10.8% of the graduate students in the U.S. are African American (CGS, 2003).

Although overall graduate school enrollment figures have slowly increased for African Americans, participation in and completion of doctoral programs continues to be problematic. During a 5-year period spanning 1975 to 1980, 8,232 Blacks earned doctorates (Brazziel, 1983). During the late 1990s, roughly 5% of doctorates awarded went to African Americans (Jones, 2001). During the 2001-2002 academic year, out of the 44,160 doctoral degrees granted by American universities, only 2,268 were awarded to African Americans, still constituting 5%. Even more alarming is the fact that for the following year, this percentage increased by only one point to 6.3%. Despite what is seemingly a small gain, this is the highest yearly percentage of African American doctoral degree conferrals (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2004). Furthermore, the national attrition rate for all doctoral students is estimated to be about 55%, meaning that more than half of those who start the doctoral degree process drop out before earning the degree (American Council on Education, 2003).

The implications of this fact are far-reaching. If relatively few African Americans are pursuing undergraduate degrees, there will continue to be only a few in the pipeline to pursue masters and doctorates. Minority students must apply to, gain admission, and successfully finish programs in order to increase doctoral degree completion rates.

Without a critical mass of doctoral candidates and degree-holders, there will continue to be a gross underrepresentation and uneven distribution of African American doctorates in the U.S. workforce. More than a decade ago, Willie, Grady and Hope (1991) stated that as the nation continued to acknowledge the need to enlarge its pool of scholars with earned doctorates, attention should have been targeted on Blacks and other minority groups. They represent an underdeveloped resource. The need to focus on African American doctoral degree attainment has been established. Although African Americans have made tremendous progress in obtaining doctorates, much progress remains to be achieved (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2004).

Often referred to as the "Father of African American History" (Collins & Cohen, 1993), Carter G Woodson, founding editor of the *Journal of Negro History,* advocated the study of Blacks' educational experiences in his landmark book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933). Woodson stated that institutions, such as Columbia University and the University of Chicago, educate Blacks based primarily on what they know of the educational needs of Whites (Woodson, 1933). This statement implies a need to examine the presence of and attainment by African Americans in higher education. In the years since Woodson's groundbreaking work, there have been relatively few studies focusing on African Americans in postsecondary programs, particularly on the doctoral level. This is especially telling in light of the proliferation of studies related to doctoral education.

As research sponsors, the CGS, Pfizer Incorporated, and the Ford Foundation have launched the Ph.D. Completion Project, a grant-funded project that is aimed at

addressing issues related to Ph.D. completion. Begun in the fall of 2004, this project will span 3 years. Previous research (Bowen and Rudestine,1992; Lovitts, 1996; Smallwood, 2004) suggests that under highly favorable conditions, no more than three-quarters of students who enter doctoral programs complete their degrees; doctoral degree completion rates are higher in the physical and life sciences than in the social sciences and humanities; higher for men than for women; higher for majority than for minority students; and higher in smaller than in larger doctoral programs (CGS, 2004).

It is hoped that this ongoing research and other studies will produce comprehensive data on Ph.D. program attrition and completion. The need for increasing representation among women and minorities at the graduate level is apparent and crucial in terms of workforce diversity (CGS, 2004).

Many of the existing studies on African Americans and their experiences during the doctoral education process are anecdotal in nature. They are rich narrative accounts of personal and academic experiences. Though limited in number, these writings provide insight for understanding the challenges of African American doctoral matriculation and degree-attainment. They signal the need for more research on the topic.

A corollary to this point is the need for additional research in higher education in order to understand the lack of greater minority representation among faculty (Melendez, 2004). Yates and Mills (2004) link African American doctoral degree completion and minority faculty hiring. They highlight the importance of examining both of these issues when considering race and status in America. Full-time faculty appointments at most American colleges and universities require completion of an earned doctorate. If

minority student doctoral degree completion rates are below those of Whites, the pool of qualified candidates for faculty positions will continue to be limited and African Americans will continue to be underrepresented. This phenomenon lends itself to further investigation, but is not the central focus of this study.

Women's Doctorate Completion

Kerlins (1997) posits that existing research on doctoral education falls within five broad categories. These categories are: (a) studies presenting statistical data on attrition, retention, and degree completion; (b) studies that focus on the condition of graduate study within a particular program; (c) studies examining pertinent issues such as mentoring or sexual harassment; (d) studies that focus on specific student populations grouped by race, gender, or field of study; and (e) studies that are published or presented as "how to guides". Each study in the review of literature fits into one or more of the categories put forth by Kerlins (1997). The review of the literature presents findings from previous studies on length of time to doctoral degree completion, factors influencing doctoral degree completion for women, and factors influencing completion of the doctorate for minorities, with particular emphasis on African Americans.

Gillingham et al. (1991) probed the concept of time to degree (TTD) in response to lengthened time to doctorate completion over a 20-year period. Time to degree had been a relatively neglected subject despite a considerable amount of research on related aspects of financing graduate school.

Gillingham et al. (1991) designed a survey that was administered to doctoral students in the arts and sciences at the main campus of Rutgers University. The survey

was distributed to all Ph.D. students (N=713) in arts and sciences. The survey measured expected time to degree, which was the sum of two components: The time already spent in a program, and the student's self-reported expected time remaining. The mean expected time to degree for the sample was 5.0 years, which was the sum of the mean time students had already spent in the program (2.7 years) and the mean expected time remaining (2.3 years).

Gillingham et al. (1991) hypothesized that the expected time remaining for arts and science doctoral students was influenced by other variables such as enrollment status (part-time versus full-time), employment, and study time. Study time was defined as any time spent working on individual/group homework or research related to course and/or program requirements. Consequently, information related to these variables was collected.

It was thought that full-time students would progress through academic programs more quickly due to the fact that they were able to maximize their course loads. Part-time students were unable to complete as many courses because they were taking fewer courses per semester, ultimately spending more semesters in school. Students receiving financial aid in the form of fellowships, scholarships and grants, which required little or no employment associated with the financial aid, were thought to complete their doctorates in less time than those who relied on income from jobs. (Gillingham et al., 1991).

Descriptive statistics were reported for participants and provided information on gender, citizenship, study time, employment, income and age. Along gender lines, men

outnumbered women in survey responses. More than half of the sample was comprised of male respondents. On average, men spent more time per week (47.3 hours) doing academic work than did women, who spent an average of 40.7 hours. International doctoral students, both men and women, spent an average of 50 hours per week compared to American students who averaged 42 hours. American doctoral students spent nearly twice the average amount of time (19 hours) as international students (10 hours) did at jobs. These figures are consistent with the fact that the mean income level for American students ($31,369) was more than twice as much as the mean income level ($13,328) for international students. When looking at the variable of age, both American and international women were slightly older than their male counterparts (Gillingham et al., 1991).

After describing the sample, regression analysis was used to reveal which factors had a direct impact on time to degree. Associations between gender, citizenship, employment hours, income, age and time to degree were examined more closely. The inverse relationship between time already spent in the doctoral program and the expected time to completion was highlighted. The more time students spent in a program, the less expected time to degree (Gillingham et al., 1991).

An additional variable that impacted completion time was area of study. Although all subjects were doctoral students in the arts and sciences, humanities students expected to take longer to finish than pure, applied and social science majors. Race was not examined as a factor. Age, gender and financial aid did not have direct effect on students' expected time to degree. These variables did have an indirect effect on

expected completion. Gender impacted employment hours/time worked. The time one worked was found to impact both income and study time, which significantly impacted progress toward the doctorate (Gillingham et al., 1991).

Much of the existing literature related to the doctoral degree process is limited, either focusing solely on gender or ethnicity (Kerlins, 1997). Spawned by the increasing number of doctorates awarded to women, Maher et al. (2004) investigated the wide variation in the time to degree for women earning doctorates in Education. The problem of delayed program completion is linked to decreased attractiveness of doctorate pursuit, reduced income for women doctoral students, and reduction of educated women in the workforce during graduate school matriculation.

Maher et al. (2004) set out to identify factors affecting women's progress toward the doctoral degree. It also examined the extent to which identified factors remain consistent across or differentiate between women who finish doctorates quickly and those who take considerably longer.

Maher et al. (2004) utilized a mixed methodology for this investigation. Factors thought to aid or hinder degree completion were identified in focus groups. A 46-item survey questionnaire was then developed by faculty members of the School of Education at Stanford University. Questions on the survey were related to helpful factors such as available funding, supportive advising, productive experiences prior to and during the doctoral program, and preparedness to conduct dissertation research. Similar questions were included on the questionnaire that was utilized as a part of this study on successful African American women doctoral candidates.

Factors that were perceived as hindrances to matriculation included lack of financial aid; poor advising; family responsibilities; personal illness; time-consuming extracurricular activities; lack of readiness for advanced research; and lack of motivation to finish in a timely fashion. The sampling frame was all doctoral degree recipients who had matriculated in the Stanford University School of Education between 1978 and 1989. There were 159 participants included the sample Based on respondents' time to degree completion, they were divided into three groups: the "early finishers," who finished in 4.25 years or less; the "average" finishers, who took between 4.5 and 6.5 years to complete; and the "late" finishers, who took longer than 6.75 years to earn their degrees (Maher et al., 2004, p. 390).

Lenz (1997) conducted a study of nontraditional-aged women and dissertation completion. Nontraditional was defined as being at least 35 years old. The purpose of the research was to reveal factors that promoted or inhibited the completion of dissertations by women who were at least 35 years of age. This topic was investigated in response to the large number of nontraditional-aged women who obtain "All But Dissertation" (ABD) status but never complete dissertation writing. This status was viewed as problematic because it not only emotionally and economically impacts ABD candidates, but lowers doctorate completion rates and overall attractiveness for doctoral programs and universities as well.

Lenz (1997) utilized a collective case study of 11 volunteers. Five women had achieved ABD status, and the remaining six participants had successfully fulfilled all

requirements and had been awarded the doctorate. Five of the participants had majored in some field of science and the other six pursued degrees in some area of Education. Six attended or graduated from small, private institutions and five attended large, state-supported schools. Both education and science majors were included in the study to determine if major and institution size had any relationship to dissertation completion. Demographic information on variables such as age, marital status and number of children was also collected by way of semistructured interviews. The average age for participants was 45 years. All but two women were married or lived with a significant other, and had children or stepchildren.

All six participants who had earned the doctorate felt that choosing a dissertation topic in which they were interested was critical to their successful completion. All but one of the science majors indicated that they had chosen dissertation topics that were funded through faculty research grants. In contrast, all six Education majors chose dissertation topics based on personal and professional interests. Research funding was not a primary factor in the Education majors' decision-making (Lenz, 1997)

Lenz (1997) reported that perceptions about the dissertation process differed between ABDs and Ph.D.s, therefore, causing them to navigate the dissertation process differently. The PhD.s persisted in the midst of setbacks and obstacles during the writing process. However, ABD students experienced difficulty, became frustrated and eventually stopped writing. The size of participants' doctoral institutions did not play a significant part in degree status.

All 11 participants revealed that they felt strong advisor-advisee relationships were vital to success. The Ph.D. completers indicated that they all had advisors who could be characterized as kind, caring and informed about the dissertation process. On the other hand, the ABD noncompleters were hindered by the absence or departure of a caring, knowledgeable advisor. Family and peer support emerged as factors contributing to degree completion. All Ph.D.s had networks of support constituted by spouses, parents, children, friends and co-workers, classmates and other persons within the university community. Participants who were ABD felt that they did not have a strong network or social support. Negative input from family and friends served as a disincentive. Financial support and dedicated dissertation writing time were also repeatedly mentioned as factors for successful dissertation completion. Ph.D. completers in both science and education noted that they found it necessary to arrange their personal and professional schedules to include time for dissertation work. Women who were categorized as ABDs articulated that they did not have the time necessary to successfully complete the final degree requirement (Lenz, 1997).

The findings of Lenz's (1997) study generated recommendations for nontraditional-aged female doctoral candidates, family and friends of doctoral candidates, faculty advisors and university administrators. Recommendations for doctoral candidates included selecting an advisor with common research interests, determining research interests and possible dissertation topics during coursework, and voicing needs and concerns throughout all phases of doctoral matriculation. Family and friends were encouraged to offer positive support through empathy and listening, and to provide time

away from work, if possible. Faculty and advisors were urged to establish collegial relationships with women early in their doctoral programs; provide prompt, constructive feedback on work; and be knowledgeable about dissertation requirements and deadlines. It was suggested that university administrators create supportive school and departmental environments conducive to doctoral student success, provide opportunities for the formation of dissertation support groups, and foster joint research projects that pair graduate students and faculty members.

Kerlins (1997) researched women's doctoral experiences in an effort to move toward a theory of doctoral persistence for women. Seven participants were interviewed via electronic mail for the qualitative study. No distinction was made in respect to race. Whether or not African American women were included in the sample is unknown. This research revealed that there was a unique combination of personal, social and institutional factors that shaped women's perceptions of the doctoral experience (Kerlins, 1997). Personal and social factors that influenced women's doctorate completion were academic self-concept, gender, age, health factors, financial status, family issues/ status and class and cultural identity. Institutional factors found to influence women's doctoral degree attainment were attendance status (i.e., part-time or full-time); employment status; department climate; department policies and practices; and adviser-advisee relationships. Students who attended school full-time took less time to complete the program. Those who worked, either part or full-time, attributed lengthened completion time to job demands, time restrictions and lack of energy needed to "push through the process". (Kerlins, 1997).

Minority Doctorate Completion

Minorities in the Graduate Education Pipeline describes a study conducted under the auspices of the Minority Graduate Education Project. The research yielded findings on the nature and extent of minority underrepresentation in higher education and described the status of minority students at various transition points from high school through graduate school (Brown, 1987). This study found that Black students often leak out of the educational pipeline before reaching graduate school. This results in underrepresentation in higher education and lower degree completion rates. Black students dropped out of the educational system at various transition points, namely, before completing high school, after high school, and after completion of a 2-year degree program. Fewer minority students than Whites earned the baccalaureate degree, which is the prerequisite for any type of advanced or graduate study.

Retention of Black and Hispanic doctoral students was studied by Clewell (1987). The study investigated three aspects of doctoral study: (a) the feasibility of determining whether factors influencing persistence and nonpersistence of minority doctoral students could be identified; (b) whether potentially successful minority doctoral students could be identified at the graduate entry level; and (c) whether institutional practices that encourage or deter minority participation in graduate school could be identified (Clewell, 1987).

Sixty-three participants, who attended 1 of 6 graduate schools, were interviewed. Fifty-four persisters, or persons who had either obtained the doctorate or reached the dissertation stage, were interviewed. Twenty-four of the persisters were male, and 30

were female. Forty-five (83%) of the sample were Black and 9 (17%) were Hispanic. Nine nonpersisters were also interviewed. Each participant was interviewed once over a one and a half hour time period. Interviews were taped and questions were based on factors that had been identified as contributing to minority student retention. Information was obtained on participants' socioeconomic status and demographic background; educational experiences for high school; undergraduate and graduate school; work experiences; factors influencing the decision to pursue higher education; factors influencing persistence; and feelings about graduate school and worth of the doctorate. Participants were also asked to provide recommendations for changes in institutional policy to increase access and retention of minority doctoral students (Clewell, 1987).

Clewell (1987) found that minority persisters in doctoral programs had at least one sibling or a spouse who had pursued some type of postsecondary education. More than one-half relied on a combination of funding for both undergraduate and graduate school. Fifty-five percent felt that they did not receive full financial support. They subsidized their education through student loans and working. Eighty-one percent of the persisters were enrolled full-time in doctoral programs.

In terms of academic support within an institution, 62% chose an advisor who had similar research interests. Eighty percent of the persisters rated their academic advisor as either supportive or very supportive. Many also credited other persons at their educational institutions with forming a support network. More than one-half had gained work experience prior to entering graduate school, and 42% chose to obtain a doctorate

for job advancement. Self-determination and unwillingness to accept failure were cited as reasons for staying in school (Clewell, 1987).

Nonpersisters cited lack of financial support and self-confidence as factors for not continuing. The absence of understanding faculty members and clear goals were also shared as reasons for not completing a program. Factors external to the institution such as family responsibilities, an unsupportive dissertation committee, and ineffective advising were also given (Clewell, 1987).

Suggestions for institutional policy changes included providing more funding; hiring more minority faculty; aggressively recruiting minority students; establishing formal support groups; and providing opportunities for student-faculty interaction. Clewell (1987) also suggests the need for further study on the characteristics and experiences of minorities who have attained a doctoral degree within the last 10 years.

Brown (1987) implored additional study of postsecondary students in disaggregated ethnic and gender groups rather than the broad labeling of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians as "minority students." The tendency to aggregate minorities into racial/ethnic groups, ignoring gender differences, could have implications for a study of enrollment, persistence and degree attainment, particularly among Black students, where there are changing gender differences in these behaviors (Brown, 1987).

Vaquera (2003) also addressed the need to study doctoral attrition and persistence as related to minority students. This comparative study examined factors impacting doctoral student persistence among Hispanic and non-Hispanic Whites. A mixed

methodology was used. Both empirical and qualitative data were collected. The sample was drawn from four doctoral cohorts enrolled at a Hispanic-serving institution in the Southwest. A theoretical framework largely based on Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention was referenced. It is interesting to note that the theoretical framework applied was one commonly associated with explaining undergraduate student departure and retention. Vaquera points out that few empirical studies on the doctoral degree process have yielded frameworks or models specific to graduate students. Furthermore, past studies have failed to include a sufficient number of minority students, making generalizations to minority populations difficult.

In Vaquera's (2003) study, the dependent variable was doctoral student persistence. Persistence was categorized by three levels that represented the stages of student departure: (a) departer (a student who left the program); (b) at-risk (a student contemplated leaving but did not); and (c) persister (a student who never thought about leaving). Independent variables in the study were departmental characteristics (support, racial climate and funding); social integration (sense of belonging and peer group interaction); academic integration (faculty support, advising, academic activities and academic satisfaction); and background characteristics (gender, race, age, parents' education, undergraduate grade point average, personal goals). A researcher-developed survey measured the impact of each of these variables on persistence.

Academic integration was revealed to be a factor of persistence. Social integration, departmental characteristics, parents' backgrounds, and undergraduate grade

point average were not found to be factors contributing to persistence. However, an unexpected finding was that a person's Hispanic cultural identity positively influenced doctoral degree persistence. Qualitative interviews were conducted with persisters to help illuminate additional factors that may have contributed to their retention.

Nettles (1990) conducted a study that examined Black, Hispanic and White doctoral students at various educational stages. The study was sponsored by the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance. Prior to this study, very little research had been conducted on the backgrounds, performances and experiences of minority students. It was important to determine why differences between white and minority students exist so that they can be minimized and/or eliminated. Differences in students' socioeconomic status, financial aid, grade point average and program satisfaction were found.

Nettles (1990) found similarities to the samples from other studies; a relatively large percentage (44%) of African American students surveyed in the sample were pursuing either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in the field of Education. Again, Education was represented more than any other field of study. Institutional discrimination, financial need, and mentoring emerged as factors that either positively or negatively influenced students during their doctoral degree pursuit.

Based on the study findings, Nettles (1990) asserted that among white, Black and Hispanic doctoral students, Black students have the greatest need for intervention as a measure to increase the likelihood of program completion. Furthermore, he suggested that more teaching and research assistantships be provided to minority students.

Additional research on factors that contribute to doctoral students' satisfaction with their programs was urged.

The CGS (2004) published a list of factors influencing graduate student outcomes. Similar to earlier findings by Nettles (1990) and Tinto (1993), mentoring, financial support, and program environments were included. In addition to these, student selection processes, research traditions of a given discipline, institutional and program procedures and processes were included.

Brazziel (1983) explored the baccalaureate origins of Black doctorate recipients in an effort to determine how more Black students could be groomed for doctoral degree pursuit and completion. This research was driven by low doctorate production among Blacks, and examined the undergraduate institutions and experiences of Black students in order to determine whether or not enrollment at a particular type of undergraduate college contributed to students' decision to pursue and complete doctoral degrees.

Archival data on Black doctorate recipients from 1975 to 1980 were obtained from the National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education that served as an advisory group of the U.S Department of Education. Data on enrollment and graduation rates were also obtained from the United Negro College Fund, the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (Brazziel, 1983). The sample was comprised of 6,320 Black doctorates. Individuals listed more than 720 different colleges and universities as baccalaureate colleges of origin. Each college listed was categorized as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) or a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Eighty-seven

Black institutions and 633 white institutions were listed. A Chi-square table of expected frequencies developed for the study indicated that 12% of the total number of respondents should have listed an HBCU as the college of origin; 3, 455 students listed an HBCU as the baccalaureate college of origin and 2,865 listed a PWI as the college of origin, concluding that almost 55% of the Blacks who earned doctorates between 1970 and 1975 attended a Historically Black College for the bachelor's degree. Findings from this study support the need to examine undergraduate college experience as a factor for doctoral degree attainment.

Brazziel and Brazziel (1987) looked at the impact of support for graduate study on program completion of Black doctoral recipients. The project specifically focused on Black doctoral recipients in the humanities over a 5-year period from 1979 to 1984. This research was funded by the Office of Program and Policy Studies of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which was interested in determining ways to increase Black doctoral production in the humanities. The investigators sought to answer three central research questions which were: (a) how did Black doctoral students support their graduate study; (b) were there differences in patterns of support between Black and Whites; and (c) to what extent did support level help or impede Black students' progress toward their doctorate?

The study sample was drawn nationally and was comprised of all Black doctoral recipients in the field of humanities between 1979 and 1984. The number of Black doctoral students surveyed was N=574. A 3% comparison sample, N= 591, of White humanities doctoral recipients was also surveyed. Data collected for both groups

were related to variables, including elapsed time between undergraduate program completion and the start of graduate school; type, size and Carnegie class of doctoral institution attended; and the main source of financial support for school. No comparison of gender groups was included (Brazziel & Brazziel, 1987).

Consistent with earlier findings (Brazziel, 1983; Wolf-Wendel, 1998), this study reported that many Black doctoral degree recipients are alumni of HBCUs. Forty-four percent of the Black doctoral recipients surveyed earned baccalaureate degrees from HCBUs. White doctoral recipients earned their baccalaureate degrees from liberal arts colleges and research universities. Respondents were divided into two groups, according to race and time to degree completion. One group completed doctoral degree requirements in 6 years or less. The other group had completion time of 13 years or longer. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine where differences in financial support between groups occurred. Students who took 6 years or less to complete the degree received more funding than those who did not (Brazziel & Brazziel, 1987).

Brazziel and Brazziel (1987) found that overall white recipients reported less financial need for schooling than Black recipients. Thirty-four percent of the white recipients earned funding for school as teaching assistants. Only 16% of the Black doctoral students reported funding from teaching assistantships. Blacks received more funding from foundation fellowships than did Whites. Black doctoral completers surveyed reported tremendous financial need but limited availability. Loans and financial support from employers constituted funding sources for nearly 30% of the Blacks

compared to 21% percent of the Whites. Doctoral recipients of both races, who received long-term external funding, completed their programs in less time than those who relied on their own earnings and/or limited financial support.

Results of this study (Brazziel & Brazziel, 1987) highlight the need for further investigation of sources of financial support and baccalaureate degree origin as possible factors for successful doctoral degree attainment for African Americans. The absence of gender specific findings prompts investigation of degree attainment by gender.

Patterson-Stewart (1995) conducted dissertation research on African American persistence through doctoral programs at predominantly white institutions.
This study is one of a limited number of qualitative studies related to African Americans and the doctoral degree process. A case study of eight participants was the research design. Response categories for the study included previous college persistence, cultural competence, family influences, religion, peer relationships, faculty relationships and campus climate. Themes that emerged from the study were historical persistence; intrapsychic factors contributing to graduation; and interpsychic, researcher-developed terms to describe factors contributing to graduation.

In a dissertation study, Simpson (2003) gathered information about the academic and social transition experiences of ethnic minority graduate students. Aligned with previous research, the shortage of minority students in all phases of higher education was reported. Mirroring earlier studies, the connection was made between minority graduate students and the development of a minority faculty workforce (CGS, 2004; Fields, 2000;

Yates & Mills, 2004). Tinto's *Theory of Student Retention* (1993) was the theoretical framework.

The ethnic minority groups represented in the study (Simpson, 2003) were Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. There were 621 respondents to a researcher-designed questionnaire that was accessible to respondents in two ways, via U.S. Mail and an online survey site. A large percentage of the sample (71%) was female. Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 29 years. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were African American; 38% Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining 13% were either Native American or did not self-identify as a member of an ethnic group. The lack of contact with a faculty advisor was shown to possibly impact students' sense of community, which is related to campus climate and student retention.

Nichols and Tanksley (2004) revisited the earlier work of Coleman (1992) by exploring how African American women with terminal degrees overcame obstacles to achieve success. The study was designed to advise women on strategies for success. The study sampling frame was comprised of the membership listing of Societas Docta, a national organization for African American women with terminal degrees in various professional fields.

Nichols and Tanksley (2004) administered a survey to 99 women and garnered a 37% response rate. The survey explored variables that may have impacted women's professional training and careers and included marital status, number of children, age at

terminal degree completion, type of undergraduate institution attended, field of study, barriers/hindrances to success and success strategies.

Seventy percent of the respondents earned degrees from HBCUs. Sixty-eight percent had earned either an Ed.D. or Ph.D. in Education. Most earned the terminal degree in their 40s and 50s. Almost half of the women decided to pursue doctorates as professional development. Fourteen percent of the participants told of experiencing discouragement from friends, co-workers, past employees and professors who did not see the need or importance of doctoral degree attainment for them. Despite the discouragement encountered by some, 88% of the women in the study indicated that strong support systems were critical to their success. These support systems were comprised of family (biological and church), friends, colleagues, and mentors. Barriers to success identified in the study were discrimination, family responsibilities, peer relationships, financial difficulties, poor communication and lack of support. Success strategies identified were having a positive attitude/self-confidence, strong support systems, being financially prepared, having articulated goals, spirituality and access to outreach services/resources (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004).

The study by Nichols and Tanksley (2004) examined factors of success for a population identical to the target population for the present study. For this reason, identified variable domains such as academic, financial and social support were included in the data collection instrument of this study.

Schwartz (2003) conducted a study of a group of African American women who had attained or were completing their doctoral degrees in Education during a 10-year

period. The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of African American women in the field of Education, since the largest proportions pursue terminal degrees in that discipline. Participants were either graduates or current students at a large, research university located in the southeastern U.S. Researchers set out to identify factors that contributed to the success of a sample of women in graduate school and factors that motivated these women to pursue graduate studies. The sample of 50 students was drawn from African American women who had finished or were enrolled in the higher education administration program at the selected university. The study sample was limited to a recent 10-year period to ensure accuracy of responses and access to the population.

A mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data was implemented. A cover letter describing the importance of the study preceded a survey, which collected data on demographic information, family background, educational background, work history, and sources of support. Upon receiving the initial survey responses and analyzing data, researchers mailed a second survey to gather information on career aspirations, interpersonal relationships, self-perceptions, and faculty interactions (Schwartz, 2003).

After results from the second survey had been received, two focus groups were convened to engage respondents in face-to-face conversations about individual and collective graduate school experiences. Sixteen women took part in the first focus group and 14 participated in the second focus group. The data revealed that 61% of the participants earned a baccalaureate degree at a predominantly white, public institution;

21% attended HBCUs; and 18% had earned a baccalaureate degree from a private school. Most participants acknowledged that they had been encouraged to attend graduate school by family members and undergraduate faculty and/or mentors. Twenty-eight percent indicated that they had been discouraged to pursue graduate studies by a co-worker, peer or family member. Career aspirations varied and did influence participants to seek doctoral degrees. The majority of the women studied were single. Belief in oneself, personal motivation, and responsibility for race advancement emerged as themes for driving factors to succeed. Mentoring by a faculty member, regardless of race, was viewed as important to socialization within an academic program and the campus culture. These factors emerged from the recall, identification and discussion of critical incidents that occurred during the women's doctoral degree experiences (Schwartz, 2003).

The Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) is useful for fostering participants' recollections of situations that occurred during a particular time period and articulating how the situations were resolved, either positively or negatively. The Critical Incident Technique is often inherent to qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 1998).

Support for Women and Minorities in Higher Education

Findings from previous studies on doctoral degree completion have led to recognition of the need for doctoral student support. Gregory (2001) identifies lack of support as a barrier to success for Black women in the academy. The concept of support is comprised of three domains: financial, academic, and social. This acknowledgment has prompted the formation of national and regional support groups, which have been founded to offer academic and social support, as well as professional development

opportunities for minority doctoral students and recipients. These organizations include the Holmes Scholars Program, the National Black Graduate Student Association, Sisters of the Academy Institute, Societas Docta, the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, and Sistermentors.

The Holmes Partnership, which was originally established in 1991 by the Holmes Group, is a consortium of institutions and agencies dedicated to educational reform. The Holmes Scholars Program is specifically designed to provide support and mentoring for men and women of underrepresented ethnic groups. The Holmes Scholars are a select group of doctoral students, pursuing studies in various areas of Education, who are enrolled at Holmes Partnership member institutions. Support is offered in the way of research and presentation opportunities, peer collaboration and leadership development. Holmes Scholar alumni and partnership members who have successfully completed the doctoral degree process serve as mentors. More than 400 students have participated in the program (Holmes Partnership, 2005).

Although this program serves a great purpose by fostering professional and personal growth, participation is limited to minority doctoral students attending one of the 64 Holmes Partnership institutions of higher education. In this regard, support that is seen as critical to success is afforded to only a small percentage of minority doctoral students across the country.

Founded in 1989, the National Black Graduate Student Association, Incorporated (NBGSA) is another organization that focuses on supporting African American graduate students. This group is a nonprofit, student-run organization dedicated to improving the

status of African Americans in higher education by systematically identifying and addressing their needs and concerns. This is achieved through increasing the number of graduate and professional students of African descent by encouraging undergraduates to pursue graduate and professional degrees by (a) providing resources that will enhance the likelihood of academic and career success of current graduate and professional students; and (b) developing a network of emerging scholars of African descent, who are dedicated and sensitive to the needs and concerns of an increasingly diverse academic community (National Black Graduate Student Association, 2005). Membership in this organization is open to graduate and professional students in all academic disciplines, and is not limited to doctoral students.

"Scholarship Through Collaboration" is the motto for the Sisters of the Academy Institute. Organized in 2001, the mission of this national organization is to facilitate the success of Black women in the academy. In this context, success is broadly defined as graduate program completion, professional development and productivity. Sisters of the Academy Institute (SOTA) foster success through networking, facilitation of individual and collaborative scholarship, and promoting professional development. Membership in SOTA is targeted toward African American women who are either pursuing graduate degrees or have obtained them. Mentoring is not limited to one person, but is offered through a support network of "sisters."

The Association of Black Women in Higher Education Incorporated (ABWHE) is committed to aiding Black women in the academy in fulfilling their own aspirations;

communicating the history of personal and professional achievements of Black women in higher education in order to preserve and increase the presence and place of Black women and men in higher education; eliminating, racism, sexism, classism, and other social barriers which hinder Black women in higher education from achieving their full potential; and providing academic and social mentoring for Black youth in order to ensure the participation and success of future generations of Blacks in higher education (Association of Black Women of Higher Education, 2005).

Similarly, Sistermentors was founded in 1997 as a nonprofit project designed to offer social support for minority women doctoral students through a dissertation support group and mentoring. Concentrated in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the group offers interactive peer coaching and feedback on individuals' writing (Lewis, 2000).

As stated by Lewis (2000), being a part of a network of doctoral candidates is extremely empowering to women. Seeing others make progress and graduate is a huge motivator. For students of color, the demands of graduate school are exacerbated by having to deal with racism, discrimination, ethnic identity development; lack of social support; being one of a few people of color in a program or department, etc. On many campuses, there are no outlets for minority students to share their feelings and experiences (University of Missouri Multicultural Center for Training, Research and Consultation, 2004). In response to this dilemma, support groups for minority graduate students have been formed.

Some of the goals of such groups are to provide social support and professional growth opportunities for ethnic minority students, normalize the experiences of these students to counter isolation on predominantly white campuses, to establish and maintain a sense of cultural identity, and to serve as a resource for minority students (Multicultural Center for Training, Research and Consultation, 2004; Virginia Commonwealth University African American Graduate Association, 2002).

The Women's and Minority Doctoral Directory is also viewed as a resource for women and minority doctoral candidates and recipients. This annual publication aids job-seekers by providing subject-area listings to prospective employers who often seek hire women and or minority employees.

Each organization discussed can be thought of as a support system or mechanism for minority doctoral students. For this reason, membership directories and listings were used to develop the sampling frame for this study.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided a historical context and a review of literature from four areas: (a) advanced degree attainment for women, (b) educational access for African Americans, (c) doctorate completion for women and minorities, and (d) support for women and minorities in higher education.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 explains the procedures and resources that were used to identify study participants and collect, manage and analyze data. Study personnel and their roles are also identified.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The purpose of this study was to determine factors that led to doctoral degree attainment by African American women in the field of Education. The researcher gathered and shared the stories of African American women doctoral degree completers in their own words. Whereas much of the existing literature on the topic is quantitative and provides "snapshots" represented by statistics gathered at one point in time, the qualitative study provides rich, detailed information collected during interaction with participants.

The reflective nature of the methodology is touted by Jeffries and Generett (2003), who state that conducting qualitative research dictates that Black females in the academy are forced to constantly consider who they are in order to better understand the world around them. Qualitative research methods have become increasingly important as modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields such as Education (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). One characteristic of qualitative research is its description of a process

or situation. Qualitative research seeks meaning of processes that lead to outcomes. (Gillham, 2000). This mode of inquiry is marked by individuals constructing social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). Qualitative research allows for verbatim participant accounts to be used in developing themes and hypotheses related to topics that are studied. The direct interaction that occurs between a researcher and participants allows the researcher to view the situation from the participant's perspective. The qualitative research tradition is characterized by narratives that give voice to study participants by accurately reporting and conveying their feelings, beliefs and realities (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995).

Role of the Researcher

Personal life experiences, education, and philosophical commitments are some of the factors that influence a researcher and how he or she chooses a topic and approaches research. Since the connection between the researcher and the research is strong, it is important to acknowledge the role of the researcher and not "write the researcher out" of the stories being told (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). To do so could lead to distortion of facts and interpretation. In light of this, the researcher's background and role are stated and were related to participants.

The researcher is an African American woman who has attended a large, urban research institution for doctoral studies. Despite attending a university that has diverse student and faculty populations, the researcher is aware that women of color make up a small percentage of the total number of doctoral degrees awarded by the institution annually. Although the number of doctorates granted to African American women

continues to increase, the rate of doctoral degree attainment for the group as whole lags behind those of women of other ethnicities and men in general. In Education, African American women outnumber African American men in doctoral degree attainment. Interest in this institution-specific phenomenon has prompted the researcher to investigate this phenomenon in a broader context. Additionally, the researcher's participation in support groups and scholars' networks has been viewed as a factor for persistence and success. The researcher acknowledges this and has used her experiences in developing the direction of this study.

Although current participation in the doctoral degree process allowed the researcher to relate to experiences common to those of participants, the researcher assumed the role of interviewer. Interviewing allowed the establishment of relationships with participants, thus promoting trust and forthrightness. The interaction between interviewer and interviewee is important. The interviewer can help control the pace (Symon & Cassell, 1998). As data were collected, the interviewer posed guiding questions and directed the pace of each interview according to participant responses.

Peer Debriefer

The peer debriefer is a person, not associated with a study, who served as a critical reviewer of decisions and procedures throughout the research process. The peer debriefer for this study was a white female who holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education. She is an adjunct, graduate-level university professor who is skilled in qualitative research, particularly case study.

The peer debriefer reviewed selected interview tapes and transcripts (Appendix C). During phone conversations and face to face meetings, she offered suggestions to control researcher bias. The peer debriefer specifically discouraged informal conversation during each interview and encouraged adherence to the interview protocol.

Daily entries in a reflexive journal, where reactions, biases and research decisions were recorded, were also suggested. Additional recommendations for data collection, management and analysis techniques were provided throughout the research process.

Research Design

A case study approach was used. According to O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner (2003), case studies are the preferred research strategy if one wants to learn the details about how something happened and why it may have happened. A case study approach is an in-depth analysis of an experience (McMillan, 2000). Utilizing a case study approach facilitated the determination of factors that attributed or hindered successful doctoral degree completion by African American women. Although the accounts of participants were conveyed in narrative form, thematic analysis pinpointed variables of interest. This offered details which allowed for better understanding of each case and will serve as a springboard for additional research. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that stories without variables do not tell enough about the larger context from which they emanate. Likewise, variables without stories are abstract and less convincing. Use of a narrative format in this study fostered readers' experiential understanding of each case (Stake, 1995).

Each participant identified and recounted critical incidents that occurred during her time in school and told how each incident affected her outcome. Discussion of critical incidents largely determined variables for successful doctoral degree attainment for African American women in the field of Education who were interviewed for this study. Participants were encouraged to volunteer information that came to mind throughout the course of each interview. The emergent case design allowed the researcher to interpret and make sense of data as it were collected. As insight was gained into the cases, important data about the cases was revealed. Case studies rely on interviewing as a method of data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Initial responses from each interview shaped plans for completing the investigation.

Sampling

Snowball sampling was used to assist in the identification of prospective participants who might not have been included on the membership directories of organizations that were used to form the sampling frame. Snowball sampling is the term for obtaining referrals from participants to other information-rich persons that might be included in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

An appeal for prospective study participants was also distributed to members of the American Educational Research Association Graduate Student Listserve (AERA-GSL). After contact information for prospective participants was obtained, initial contact letters, informed consent forms and questionnaires were mailed to them (Appendices D, E, F). Purposeful sampling allowed for interesting cases to be selected. Purposeful sampling is the selection of particularly informative or useful participants (McMillan,

2000). To avoid researcher bias as a threat to study validity, a matrix was used (Appendix G). As the completed qualitative questionnaires were received from prospective participants, information was entered on the matrix. Selection of information-rich participants was made based on respondents' access to videoconferencing, geographic location, doctoral institution attended, doctoral degree and year obtained, age and availability. The target number of interviewees was eight. The inclusion of eight participants allowed for variance in age, program of study, institution choice and time to degree (TTD). In addition to this, the selection of eight African American women doctorates generated thick, in-depth descriptions for each participant.

Previous qualitative studies of similar demographic groups also employed sample sizes ranging from 6 to 8 participants (Kerlins, 1997; Patterson-Stewart, 1995). Although there were expected program and institutional differences among U.S. doctorate-granting colleges and universities, program completion at a Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or United States Department of Education (USDOE) accredited institution was a selection criterion. This was prompted by the proliferation of doctorate-granting, for-profit institutions that are accredited by other governing bodies. The inclusion of graduates of such entities would likely present a distorted view of the doctoral degree process, thus compromising the integrity of the study.

Participants

Participants were African American women who successfully completed the doctoral degree process within the last 10 years. The inclusion of participants who had matriculated within a time span of 10 years enabled the researcher to determine whether emergent patterns and themes were common to a particular time period, region, and type of institution or individual. Furthermore, much of the research that has been conducted on African American women in higher education was done during the early to mid-1990s. This study offers insight on factors to which recent African American women doctoral degree recipients attribute to their success. The recency of program completion likely facilitated participants' clear recall of critical incidents and events.

All participants held the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education. Although participants had to meet the criterion of having earned either a Doctor of Education degree or Doctor of Philosophy degree, all eight participants held the latter. Andersen (1983), Buccino (1991), and Baez (2002) conclude that the Ed.D. and Ph.D. are very similar in terms of program requirements, knowledge bases, competencies and employability. Therefore, there was no distinction between the two degrees. Participants were alumnae of traditional, campus-based doctoral programs at institutions that are classified by the Carnegie Foundation as either Doctoral/Research-Extensive or Doctoral/Research Intensive. Graduates of online and/or for-profit institutions were excluded from the study.

Site and Participant Selection

Prospective study participants were identified through several means. Listings were obtained from the Women and Minority Doctoral Directory 2004, and the membership directories of the National Association of Holmes Scholars Alumni, the National Black Graduate Student Alumni Association, Sisters of the Academy, Societas Docta, the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, and other organizations with listings of African American women doctorates. These organizations were selected to form the sampling frame because their membership is comprised of members of the study's target population. Snowball sampling was also utilized. Members of the organizations comprising the sampling frame were asked to identify potential study participants who met the criteria of being an African American woman who had successfully earned a doctorate between 1995 and 2005. After consent forms were received, subsequent data collected from prospective participants on the initial questionnaire was compiled and the researcher attempted to select two participants from each of the designated regions of the country: North, South, East and West. Variance in age and educational experience was also considered during the selection process.

Gaining Access to Participants

Initial contact with prospective participants was made through letter sent via U.S. mail. The introductory mailing included a cover letter to introduce the researcher and explain the proposed study.

An informed consent form was also enclosed in the mailing to prospective participants. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included by the researcher.

Respondents who expressed interest in participating in the study by returning the informed consent form were mailed a questionnaire. A stamped envelope addressed to the researcher was included with the questionnaire. The questionnaire collected demographic information, which the interviewer then asked selected participants to expound upon during the two interviews and subsequent follow-up exchanges.

Critical Incident Technique

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) is defined by Flanagan (1954) as a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate the potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. An incident is defined as any specifiable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, the incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer. In short, interviewees are asked to think about a problem or situation that was encountered and to verbalize the steps taken to solve the problem or face the situation.

The CIT is reflective in nature and undergirds the case study approach. The eight aspects of the CIT mirror the interview process that is often used in a case study approach.

According to Symon and Cassell (1998), these aspects are:

1. Preliminary design work and determination of the sample.

2. Gaining access to the sample through a letter of introduction, e-mail and scheduling of interviews.

3. Introducing the CIT method and getting the interview underway by asking participants to reflect on a circumstance and to engage in conversation about it, thus establishing rapport and trust

4. Focusing the theme and giving an account of oneself as a researcher to the respondent.

5. Controlling the interview by probing the incidents and clarifying one's understanding.

6. Concluding the interview.

7. Taking care of ethical issues.

8. Analyzing the data.

A drawback of the CIT is that it challenges the observer/interviewer when recording observations of problem solving simply because the event has already occurred. Participants' actions may not have been recorded or documented (Symon & Cassell, 1998). Consequently, participant reflection is subject to inaccuracy related to human memory.

Nevertheless, there are many advantages associated with CIT. The method leads to focused discussion of issues under investigation, facilitates the revelation of issues that may not have been anticipated, but are important to the interviewee. Lastly, the technique enables issues to be viewed in context during conscious reflection. Participants are able to attribute the outcome of an event based on recollection of personal actions (Symon & Cassell, 1998). Initially, two interviews per participant were planned. However, after interviews with the first two women, it was decided that one interview per

participant would provide more than enough data. By conducting an hour-and-a-half long interview, the researcher was able to delve into participants' doctoral experiences in the academic, personal, and social domains. Critical incidents in the lives of study participants were revealed and discussed during conversations.

Validity of the Study

Several precautions were taken to enhance the validity and rigor of the study. These precautions included use of researcher documentation of procedure, taped interviews and member checking. The research proposal was submitted to the University Institutional Review Board to ensure that the study protocol met compliance with all regulations and policies. The peer debriefer also reviewed the research process to gauge its effectiveness and to suggest improvements.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an initial questionnaire and an interview. Prospective participants were contacted through letters that were mailed. Efforts to ensure confidentiality were articulated in the informed consent form, which was mailed with a cover letter. The informed consent form was signed, returned to the researcher and read to all participants by the researcher at the start of each interview. All mailings requiring a response included stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher. All initial questionnaires were numbered for tracking purposes and data management.

Interviewing

Interviewing in qualitative research is conversational, flexible and fluid. The goal of an interview is to gather information from different perspectives. Stake (1995) calls

the interview the main road to multiple realities. Its purpose is achieved through active engagement by interviewer and interviewee around relevant issues, topics, and experiences during the interview itself (Mason, 2002). After establishing rapport with each participant, discussion about the participant's doctoral matriculation occurred. According to Silverman (2001), posing questions based on findings from previous research on women and minority doctoral students will generate researcher-provoked data.

Additionally, regular contact via telephone and e-mail was maintained to keep participants informed. Real time videoconference interviews were conducted with participants. Access to videoconferencing was a criterion for participant selection.

Videoconference interviews were recorded using a Polycom Internet-based Videoconferencing System. Each participant was interviewed for a minimum of 1 hour. Initially, two interviews with each participant were planned. However, upon completion of the first interview, and subsequently the completion of the first set of interviews, it was determined that more than enough data had been collected. Member checking and participant review enabled participants to correct or clarify information by providing corrections, additional comments and/or details.

Date saturation occurred after four interviews, which was halfway through the interview process. The decision was made to continue interviewing in order to present cases in which participants represented different geographical regions, age groups and areas of study. An interview briefing checklist was used by the researcher as a data management tool, which also served as a reminder to gain trust of the participants by

explaining steps of the interview process (Appendix H). Each interview was loosely structured with questions and prompts generated by the researcher (Appendix I). A facesheet was created for each participant and contained her pseudonym, interview date, time and location (Appendix J). Each interview was audio and videotaped.

Data Management

Data management tools included a reflexive/field journal and field notes. The reflexive or field journal articulates the researcher's thoughts in writing, and creates a decision trail that can be used by the peer debriefer to audit the research process. This enhances reflexivity of the study. Member checking was also done to enhance the design validity. During exchanges with participants, the researcher restated participants' responses so that they informally reviewed the data for accuracy.

Data Analysis

As a naturalistic study in which data were continuously collected and evaluated (McMillan, 2000), member checking was conducted throughout each interview to record and report responses accurately. A professional transcriber was employed to produce interview transcripts as Microsoft Word documents. The unexpected discontinuation of service by the original transcriber resulted in the formation of a transcription team comprised of the researcher and four other transcribers. Each transcription team member was skilled in transcription and word processing using Microsoft Word. Interviews were transcribed, data were organized and the researcher identified categories based on responses. These categories were coded for emergent themes. The themes then provided a context for a report to be presented on the findings of the study. To ensure accuracy,

member checking also took place after each interview. The researcher followed up with participants to make sure the accounts had been recorded as shared (Appendix K). An electronic copy of the interview transcript was sent with a cover letter via e-mail to each participant. Each woman was asked to review the transcript for accuracy. If needed, corrections and clarifications were noted on transcripts and returned to the researcher. Participant review was employed to allow participants to review the researcher's summaries of interviews, after transcription, in order to ensure accuracy of the facts. Transcripts were mailed and/or e-mailed to participants for review. Use of a tape recorder, videorecorder and field notes was the strategy used to ensure that participant language was recorded and reported verbatim.

Constant Comparison Method

The researcher utilized the Constant Comparative Method to sort data during analysis. Johnson and Christensen (2000) note the ongoing interplay between the researcher, data and the developing theory in Constant Comparison. Careful examination of data will allow comparison and contrast to occur. Through this process, data were divided into topics. Steps outlined by Glaser (1978) were taken. After data were collected, the researcher looked for key issues, recurrent events or occurrences that could be compared and contrasted to form categories. Categories were described as new incidents were examined and included while subsequent data were collected and analyzed. Relationships between variables influencing successful doctoral degree attainment in education by African American women were explored.

Delimitations

Since data were sought directly from participants, triangulation using multiple sources was not possible. Furthermore, reliance on membership listings of organizations might have resulted in the acquisition of outdated contact information for prospective participants, ultimately impacting the response rate for the initial letter of appeal and consent form that were mailed. The geographic distance between participants reduced the feasibility of conducting a focus group.

The purview of the study was limited to doctoral degree recipients in the field of Education. Findings may differ for doctoral degree recipients in other academic fields. Factors for successful doctoral degree attainment may also differ for recipients of other ethnic or racial backgrounds.

The qualitative study examined closely the experiences of the selected participants. Therefore, the uniqueness of experiences shared in the study's findings may not be generalizable, but may have transferability of factors to other populations.

Summary

Chapter 3 explained the procedures and resources that were used to identify study participants and collect, manage and analyze data. Study personnel and their roles were identified.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine what factors led to or hindered the success of African American women who chose to pursue and complete doctoral studies in education. This chapter presents factors and central themes that emerged from the data. It begins with an overview of the research process, including data collection and analysis. The findings are first presented as a group summary of participants, then in individual participant profiles with excerpts of interview transcripts. Listings of experiences and/or factors, as well as hindrances or obstacles to successful doctoral degree attainment and supporting quotations, are also included.

Overview of the Research Process

All participants completed a questionnaire (Appendix F) and participated in an in-depth videoconference interview. Forty questionnaires were distributed to prospective participants via U.S. mail and electronic mail. Twenty three questionnaires were returned. A selection matrix (Appendix G) was designed to display demographic information for all prospective participants and to facilitate the selection process.

Women who did not have access to videoconferencing or who were not available for interviews within the designated time period were disqualified. Year of completion

was another qualifying factor. Participants must have earned doctorates within the past 10 years at the time of the interview. Efforts were made to select two participants from 1 of 4 age groups: 20-29 years; 30-39 years; 40-49 years; and 50-59 years, and from 1 of 4 geographical regions of the country: North, South, East and West. When this was not possible, program of study, the doctoral granting-institution and time to degree were used as selection criteria to achieve variance. Eight participants were selected.

Interviews were conducted over a 10-week period, from March 1 to May 8, 2006. Field notes were recorded in interview packets for each participant. Every interview was audiotaped. Most of the interviews were videotaped. Technical difficulties resulted in two interviews not being videotaped. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and a team of transcribers, using video and/or audiotapes. The transcription team was recruited by the researcher after the transcriber who had originally been hired was unable to complete the task. Each transcriber pledged confidentiality and returned audio and videotapes to the researcher upon completion.

A peer debriefer served as the critical reviewer of decisions and procedures during the research process. The peer debriefer was an educational consultant and adjunct university professor, who was skilled in qualitative research. Each interview transcript was assigned a number and a color code to facilitate identification and retrieval during data analysis. Data for each participant were kept in a corresponding folder. The peer debriefer reviewed interview tapes and transcript numbers one and seven. Review of notes began after the first two interviews to identify possible themes, categories and

patterns. Responses were coded and analyzed using the Constant Comparison Method (Glaser, 1978).

Transcripts were analyzed manually using colored paper and codes. Each transcript was read multiple times. Key words and events were highlighted, then coded. A summary sheet listing success factors, obstacles and hindrances to success, critical incidents and key quotes was created for each participant. Once summary sheets were completed, responses were counted for frequency and grouped according to topic. Responses have been integrated in participant profiles and are reported as categories and themes later in the chapter.

Presentation of Findings

The findings of the study are presented in three parts: (a) a description of the participants as a group, (b) participant profiles, and (c) emergent factors and themes from data analysis. Demographic information obtained via questionnaires and excerpts from interview transcripts was used to elucidate themes.

Description of Participants as a Group

Eight participants were interviewed. All were women who graduated with a doctorate in education. Two of the participants were originally from the Caribbean and self-identified as Black or Afro Caribbean. One participant was biracial and self-identified as African American. The other five participants also self-identified as African American.

Each participant held a Doctor of Philosophy degree that had been earned within the last four years, between 2002 and 2006. Ages at doctoral degree completion ranged

from 25 years to 54 years. The mean age for participants was 36 years. All but one of the participants attended graduate school as full-time students. Two received undergraduate degrees from HBCUs. One participant began undergraduate study at an HBCU but transferred to a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), where she received her degree. Five of the 8 participants were the first in their respective families to earn a college degree. At least one parent of each of the remaining three held a bachelor's degree.

Seven of the 8 women were awarded degrees from state-supported doctoral granting institutions. Time to degree ranged from less than 2 years to 9 years. All received some type of financial aid, with the majority borrowing student loans. At some point during matriculation, seven held assistantships. Additionally, six held jobs outside of a campus job or graduate assistantship. Two participants were recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarship during its inaugural year.

Two participants were married at the start of their programs and two others married while in school. The others remained single, having never married. Three participants were biological parents at the start of their programs. Another gained custody of two nonbiological children during her time in school. One became pregnant during the dissertation stage and gave birth a few weeks after successfully defending her dissertation.

Most of the participants attended school in the southern region of the United States. One attended graduate school in the Midwest and another in the Northeast. All,

except one, currently work in higher education. The exception is one who works as a K-12 building-level administrator for an urban public school system.

All participants spoke candidly and recounted their experiences during doctoral degree matriculation. Guiding questions (Appendix I) posed by the researcher, were designed to facilitate discussion of factors leading to successful doctoral program completion, as well as perceived barriers and/or hindrances to successful doctoral degree completion.

Each participant profile presents details about the family, educational, and professional background of each woman. Table 1 provides a visual summary of participant profiles.

Participant Profiles

Each participant profile provides demographic information about the participant and excerpts from responses to guiding interview questions revealing her perceptions of factors leading to her successful doctoral degree attainment, hindrances or obstacles to doctoral degree attainment and critical incidents that occurred during matriculation.

Participant 1-Veronica

"I knew that I would be successful." Veronica received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from an urban university in the Southeast. She was 35 years old when she earned her degree in 2005. As a wife and mother of three, Veronica viewed balancing academic and home life as a challenge. She pursued the Ph.D. part-time over a 4-year period while working as an assistant principal at an elementary school in the

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Participant (Pseudonym)	Doctoral Degree and Year of Completion	Doctoral Institution Region/State or Private Affiliation	Degree/Area Specialty	Age at Completion	Full or Part-time Study	Attended HBCU Undergraduate	Total Time in Program (TTD)	Marital Status	Had Children	Worked	Current Job
Veronica	Ph.D. 2005	Southeast (State)	Educational Leadership	35	Part-time	No	4 yrs.	Married	Yes (3)	Yes	K-12 School Administrator
Angela	Ph.D. 2002	Southwest (State)	Educational Administration, Curriculum and Instruction	25	Full-time	Yes	<2 yrs.	Single	No	Yes	Assistant Professor
Aminah	Ph.D. 2004	Southwest (State)	Multicultural Teacher and Childhood Education	36	Full-time	Started but transferred to PWI	6 yrs.	Single	Yes (2) non-biological	Yes	Assistant Professor
Madison	Ph.D. 2005	Southeast (State)	Counselor Education and Supervision	29	Full-time	Yes	4 yrs.	Married while in school	Became Pregnant	Yes	Assistant Professor
Denise	Ph.D. 2006	Midwest (State)	Educational Policy Studies	28	Full-time	No	5 yrs. Dual Degree Program	Single	No	No	Scholar-in-Residence
Vanessa	Ph.D. 2002	Southeast (State)	Science Education	42	Full-time	No	4 yrs.	Married	Yes (2)	No	Assistant Professor
Ennad	Ph.D. 2004	Northeast (Private)	Curriculum and Instruction	41	Full-time	No	5 yrs.	Single	No	Yes	Assistant Professor
Anne-Marie	Ph.D. 2004	Midwest (State)	Mathematics Education	54	Full-time	No	9 yrs.	Divorced/ Remarried	Yes (1)	Yes	Assistant Professor

vicinity of her university. Her lifelong desire to "be a doctor" and to have a better life fueled her pursuit. She stated: "I really thought that education was the key out of poverty. And I also grew up in the islands [Bahamas], was very poor and with a mom. She was mistreated and didn't have a lot of education [and had] a lot of children. I knew, very early, that I did not want that life. While she was preparing me to be a mother and a homemaker, I knew that I needed to be educated. I knew that getting a minimal degree, a doctorate, associates or even a master's education was my passport, a vehicle of empowerment for a better life."

In terms of adjustment to the academic rigors of doctoral study, Veronica says she was prepared. However, an encounter with a professor early on in her program caused her to question herself and her choice to pursue the degree. Nonetheless, this encounter proved to be a critical incident for her as she decided to persevere, despite earlier doubts. She recalled: "I do remember the first class I took and the professor was not a nice person. It looked like his agenda for that first class was to scare everybody away. That was the first time I questioned myself. It felt like it [the class] was very intense. I didn't know whether or not if I was cut out for that or at that time if it was the thing for me to do. But after that first time, I had to deal with it. I have that type personality that when people frustrate me or upset me I want to do more." Renewed self-determination that was spawned by Veronica's experience during her first semester of coursework became the driving force for her persistence, despite other challenges and obstacles. She recalled that not everyone was supportive of her effort.

Financially, Veronica believed that she was unable to receive fellowships or scholarships because of her part-time status. The incurrence of debt was not a big hindrance, and she viewed getting a student loan as necessary. She shared: "Financially, I applied for student loans, so that was my only option. I knew I had to pay my loans back. Also when people find out you are working on a doctorate, some of them want to know why you do it and doubt you. It's a negative energy. I didn't absorb the negative energy and I knew where I was going."

When asked about support that she received during her doctoral studies, Veronica replied that support came primarily from her husband. She looked regretful as she lamented that there was very little financial, institutional, academic or social support from other sources. "The type of support that is loosely associated was meeting classmates and others in the program, students of color. There were friends that I met along the way as I took classes. There was no institutional support. I really separated myself from the institution. I focused on the Ph.D. and that was it. My advisor left. I had to guide myself. There were two additional advisors who were assigned but they didn't advise me. I looked at the sheet of classes and chose two every semester. I pretty much went through the program myself. There was a staff person and a professor who were most helpful to me during my program. Others were not helpful. At work, I had a boss who didn't like the idea of a young, black woman getting a Ph.D. Since most of my family members didn't have formal education or a degree higher than a bachelor's, they didn't feel I needed to go beyond my master's, let alone a Ph.D. Some of them said, 'Oh, okay. You are doing that.' So there wasn't a lot of support in that way. My husband was most

supportive. He would help me by doing housework if I had to do a paper or he would watch the kids, stuff like that."

Veronica also described some coursework as challenging. High blood pressure and multiple hospitalizations were also several of the health issues she faced and overcame. She stated: "During my matriculation, I had high blood pressure that escalated. I had four surgeries during the doctoral process. I remember going into one surgery making sure that my chair got Chapter 2 [of dissertation]. I did my Chapter 4 in the hospital. I studied for comps [the comprehensive exam] right after having a baby, while nursing and on medication." However, her biggest challenge was interacting with a dissertation chair, who she thought of as less than helpful. This chairperson was assigned to her after two other faculty members, who had each agreed to serve as chairperson of her committee, left her university. She emphatically recounted interacting with her dissertation committee chairperson: "I think my biggest challenge was dealing with my dissertation chair. He was the Chair from Hell. Satan Incarnate. He took every opportunity to make me feel like nothing. He wanted to sabotage me, but I succeeded. He would tell me to do a whole lot of research, then say, 'Oh! You don't need this.' He would have me make corrections and then he would ask me, 'Why did you make these corrections?' 'Because you asked me to.' 'Oh, well, I changed my mind.' I told him that I was going to write my dissertation in 1 year. He said it was impossible and didn't try to help me. And every step of the way, I left his office in tears. I really disliked talking to him so much so that when he called the house, I would look at the caller ID and decide if I wanted to talk. Even afterwards, he did not stick up for me for some of the

corrections that they [the committee] wanted me to make. He never really wanted me to do it."

When questioned about how she handled the challenges, which were seen as hindrances, Veronica shared the following strategies: "I knew that I would be successful. I visualized by writing grades before the class ended. I knew everything I wanted to do. I had a [dissertation] topic long before it was time to write the dissertation. I completed everything on my timeline, despite my chair's psychotic episodes." Veronica's overall doctoral experience was not pleasant. She admitted: "The work and effort was equal to eight C-Sections with medication. That's how bad my experience was. If I had to do it over again, I would not get the Ph.D."

After reflecting on her doctoral experience, Veronica offered suggestions to doctoral program administrators in an effort to improve the experiences of current and future African American women doctoral students. The suggestions were: (a) provide support (as an institution and one-on-one); (b) meet with a group every quarter; (c) provide mentors; (d) just have someone to talk to on a more personal level (would be helpful); (e) get alumnae to meet with students; and (f) professors need to be more welcoming.

Participant 2-Angela

"I looked to people I was mentoring for support. They didn't know that they were supporting me, but just to have them look up to me, helped me get through some of the challenges." Earning her Ph.D. in Urban Education at age 25, Angela was the youngest study participant. She earned her baccalaureate degree from an HBCU then taught for 2

years in an urban school district in the Southwest, while she pursued a master's degree. Working as a teacher and earning a doctorate had been long time goals for Angela as she recalled: "I would say a lot of things. When I was in undergrad I set up a 5-year plan; and in that plan, one of the things that I wanted to do was to have an earned doctorate, and I looked to Mary McLeod Bethune for a lot of motivation because of what she had done in Education. And so, for so many years my mother had told me, 'You know education is not the way to go. You won't make any money and you know, let somebody else help those kids,' and I said, 'No. They need good teachers and they especially need people that are going to train good teachers,' and so that was my ultimate motivation. Just intrinsically, I wanted to meet my own goals and have my own motivation and then from external motivation, it was just to be the best educator I could be and I knew that a doctorate was going to be how I got there."

Angela told the story about how she chose the institution at which she matriculated. "I started considering doctoral programs and I had done some previous graduate work at another school, and did my master's. Then [I] applied for a scholarship while in my master's, then got the scholarship, full ride, it paid for everything and they said pick the institution in which you want to attend. I only had 7 days to come up with that decision and my doctoral institution had really pursued me and said that whatever your scholarship is, we'll match it with a stipend. And so I had to choose my school because of the time constraints, but if I had had more time, I would have probably pursued another school. So, it was only timing and the scholarship that had me choose the school I did because I really didn't want two degrees from the same university."

During her time in school, Angela had a graduate assistantship in which she served as an assistant director of a campus program. Assuming the program assistant directorship required a period of adjustment. She spoke about her transition as a student worker and said: "The adjustment to the doctoral program, as far as academia, was not hard. I mean, the academics work was pretty much the same and I actually found that. . .I feel that undergraduate was much tougher than graduate because you know in undergraduate you are given information, you have to learn it, you have to memorize, you have. . . pretty much you have to display your knowledge based on what they teach you. But in graduate school, I found that a lot of it was self-teaching and self-reflection and looking at theories and practices and research and coming out with your own educational philosophy and opinions based on that. So, the academic transition was not hard. The thing that I think was kind of difficult for me was I had this assistant directorship but yet I still wasn't Dr. so-and-so, so the secretaries made it very clear that I was still really a graduate assistant. That's how the secretaries came across. The chairman of the department treated me with high regard and so he made the transition easy and as a matter of fact he gave me so much money for travel that I was able to start my research agenda as a graduate student."

The graduate assistantship coupled with a fellowship provided income for Angela, which alleviated financial burdens that are often faced by graduate students (Brazziel & Brazziel, 1987). In talking about financial support during her time in school, Angela reported: "Financial support came through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. I was a Gates Scholar their inaugural year. Bill and Melinda Gates, of course, you may know,

gave a billion dollars to the United Negro College Fund to manage in efforts to recruit as many minority students as possible in five core areas that are needed, one of those areas was Education. The inaugural year that that scholarship was introduced, I applied for it and received it. That took care of my finances and then, in addition to that, the university gave me a stipend and the stipend helped me live month to month because that was a monthly paycheck."

Social support was also received from her family and boyfriend, who would later become her husband. Concerning social support from family, Angela said this: "Right before the doctoral degree, right at the end of my master's, my long time friend who I had been friends with for 5 years, we never thought about dating, but one day we were actually stung by the love bug. All of a sudden this friendship turned into an automatic connection. So right at the end of my master's, we started dating. We knew it would be challenging because it was long distance. I moved. He still lived in [the other city] and it was a 2½ to 3-hour commute. And we dated long distance. He was my support system. Very supportive. He would come on the weekends. He would do whatever I needed to do. Do whatever he needed to do to help me emotionally. My mom was supportive as well. She didn't get strongly supportive until the end. Even at one point, she was saying, 'Either plan the wedding or get your doctorate.' She would have preferred that I just let the wedding go and not get married. I did both. And my father was very supportive of me but to a critical standpoint. He was very critical, making sure that I always was *the* best. It was very hard to be mediocre for him. I had to be the best." Angela credited on campus peers, colleagues and undergraduate students with being a source of support that

aided in her success. "I had two close buddies, both African American males, and we talked quite a bit. One of them was the Dean of Students, so he had a very high profile job on campus and the other was a graduate assistant. We confided in each other. There were very few [African Americans]. The students who had the African American or the Black Student Union really thought I was a professor or something so they never really invited me to functions. Most of the time when they had functions it was during my class times so I couldn't go. But I served more as a mentor to other African American students, undergrad and grad. They really came to me for advice. I was close to the other Black students, but I didn't ever get involved in the organizations per se because the organizations met when I was either working or in class. But, I did befriend a lot of African American students and help them along the way. The other thing is that I looked to people I was mentoring for support. They didn't know that they were supporting me, but just to have them look up to me, helped me get through some of the challenges. I did befriend, or actually seek camaraderie with the department chair, who was another minority."

Participation in the Holmes Scholars Program was also a part of Angela's extended support system. She mentioned that she was personally approached by her dean to participate in the program. Even though she had a strong support system, that served as a protective factor, Angela also found herself in some difficult situations that she considered as hindrances or obstacles to success. One such obstacle included discrimination based on her age. She recounted the painful experience and shared the confession of one of her dissertation committee members, who was a young African

American male assistant professor. "Well, when I started my graduate program, the doctoral program, I was 23, I had just turned 23 and I went in with the goal in mind to finish in 2 years. The weird thing was, the year before I had finished, there was a young lady named Kara Mason [pseudonym] who finished her doctorate at [age] 26 in 2 years. She was White. She was White and they. . .you know. . . they elevated her; they had special receptions for her. You know they said, 'She's awesome.' Now, I must tell you, she did not look 26, her composition and her countenance and her body type and everything made her look more closer to 40, but she was still 26. Another thing, she had already been a principal when she finished. She was a school principal. But me, it was obvious that I was young. It was obvious that I finished all my coursework by 24, it was obvious that I was going to be finished with the doctorate by 25, which would make me the youngest Ph.D. ever from [the school]. It wasn't until my wedding, when all of my committee members showed up at the wedding through the receiving line. He [young African American professor and dissertation committee member] said to my husband, 'They tried to keep your wife from getting her doctorate. But, I'm so proud of her. She came through.' He [Angela's husband] said, 'What do you mean?' And he [dissertation committee member] said, 'Oh! They didn't want her to get it. They said she was too young but there was nothing I could say because I am not tenured, and so I had to just let them do what they needed to do.'" Angela admitted that the topic was still hard for her to discuss. However, now as a member of the professoriate, if she were ever made aware of a similar dilemma faced by a student, she would not remain silent as her committee member did. "It is kind of emotional because if I was in that situation, I don't care if. . .

you know, because I'm on tenure track now, so I know what I'd do in that case. If that happens to one of my students and they were wrongly being held back because of their age, color so forth, there's no way I would stand back and let it happen." In addition to age discrimination, Angela named racism as a challenge she faced during her time in graduate school. She stated: "Another challenge I was faced with, I feel, was racism, unfortunately. I had done so much for everybody. I had thrown two of the instructors' wives baby showers with the department secretaries. I would take over the office if the secretaries wanted the day off. I would write up proposals with the chair of the department, and he was American Indian. Even though I was doing all this stuff and they seemed to like me, it just never was enough. Something just wasn't right. They treated me kindly, and I was always treated as a favorite doctoral student, the best and they would say that stuff, but something didn't seem right. Of course, I found out at the end of the dissertation what it was. At one point, I felt I could confide in the chair and this after I had heard several professors speak poorly about him. They were all White. They said that if he wasn't Native American, he would never be in that position. He had no right to be in that position. His research is old. Why should he be over them? They were prolific researchers and scholars and all that. One day, we happened to be on the same flight after a research conference and we were scheduled pretty close. We were on the same flight so we asked the flight attendant if we could sit next to each other. So I said to him, 'Dr. [X] I'm facing some challenges and I think that it's tied closely to race but I don't want it to be. I don't want to feel that it's that.' And he said, 'Oh. What are they?' I said, 'I've finished my coursework pretty early, I've been researching and I've been to

AERA several times.' He said, 'You are doing a wonderful job. If we had all the doctoral students doing all that you've done, we'd be very successful.' And I said, 'You know, they talk about you, too.' And I started telling him everything they had ever said about him and he didn't believe it. In a way, he acted surprised, but I think he knew. So I opened up to him and it seemed like he really appreciated that. I just dealt with that one challenge, the racism challenge by telling the chair."

Like Participant 1, Veronica, Angela also experienced difficulty with her dissertation committee chairperson. Angela perceived that difficulties arose only after she reached the dissertation stage and that the problem was rooted in her chairperson's bias against her young age and the rate of her program completion.

"I just went in and said, 'This is what I'm doing, okay? Here's the amount of coursework I have to take. I'm going to finish in 2 years.' No one else knew that. But they didn't pay attention so while. . .when I talk about paying attention and they, I'm speaking of my committee. By the time they looked up, I had finished coursework and was starting on my dissertation and so, um, that kind of threw the committee for a loop and my chair, who had been my biggest cheerleader. There were five people and one of the things I didn't mention is that my chair. . . this person I worked for decided she was going to step down as my chair and let one of the professors that tried to help as much as she could be the chair and I said, 'No. There's no way. I don't want you to step down.' So the other professor had to persuade her to be co-chair of my committee. It was like she wanted to wash her hands of it. Leave me out to dry, basically. Then it turned into a very hate, love/hate relationship and the tables turned. She. . . when she found out that I

was close to finishing and had already been working on my dissertation, she increased my workload [for the assistant director assistantship]. She gave me 10 times more responsibilities than I had prior to getting to the dissertation point. And she turned the committee against me and there was this one faculty member on my committee that was African-American. And I had him on my committee specifically because he was an African-American and because I knew he would be my spokesperson and stand up for me and he turned out, you know, to just go along with the flow, whatever the committee said, he did."

Angela went on to talk about the obstacles with which she was confronted when dealing with deteriorating relationships with the committee while struggling to complete the dissertation. "Well, someone explained to me that, that this is a hazing process. You just can't come out and they say 'Congratulations Dr. Angela,' and I said I've done everything I needed to do, I mean, I've done the research, I've done a pilot study, and then when they could not stop me academically because I had made a 4.0 throughout my entire doctoral program, they couldn't stop me there. They couldn't say, you know, cause they tried everything. So they tried everything they could to discourage me from finishing and they gave me 100 pages of revisions. 'Have it done in two weeks.' Well, I finished the revisions in 1 week. Then they said, 'You're not going to be able to'. . . I did the revisions, then came back for my stand to deliver, for my actual defense. By this time, they had raked me through the mill. I mean every freaking thing they could possibly pull out, they pulled out. Whether it was, 'Oh this paper isn't actually 100% cotton. You need to get more paper.' I ended up charging on my credit card over $700

on the different copies that I had to have made and bound because every time I would have it printed they were saying, 'This is the signature copy, this is what we need to do.' They would change it. I came back and they said, 'We need you to revise the entire Chapter 4 and the entire Chapter 3, and you cannot do that in time to graduate and so we want you to put your graduation off.' And I said, 'Tell me exactly what you want me to revise.' I took copious notes. I said, 'Tell me everything. Let's leave no page unturned,' and I was really about to break down crying. I just got really strong at this point and I said 'What is it that I need to do? Tell me everything because once I do this, this is final.' And so, ah, she said, 'There's no way you're going to finish. You will have to have it in 12 days,' and my advisor said, 'I'm going to be in Germany and there's no way for me to sign it,' and another person looked at me and said, 'You know, I have plans for next week, too, and there's no way you'll be able to catch up with me to sign it in time.' Then another professor said, 'I'm going to be on sabbatical.' And so they all turned their backs on me, even the one African American male. So I said, 'Well then, why don't I get it done before you leave?' They said, 'There's no way you can do that,' but I did. I tracked every single one of them down to sign that dissertation, and went to the graduate college. I turned it in to the graduate college. My goal was to finish in May but they held it up so much that I couldn't graduate in May. I ended up having to get my doctoral degree in June of 2002."

Angela revealed that she felt like giving up at times during the dissertation writing process. She shared that her faith in God helped sustain her. "There were times, it felt like it was just me and God. I felt like nobody wants this as much as me so I had to do

what I had to do to get it and I had to trust God. And there were times, I remember so clearly. . .I was about to give up. I would just say, 'Forget the doctorate,' and this was after coursework was finished and everything. I would have been ABD. I was crying to myself. There was no one to talk to and this Christian magazine happened to come in the mail. I turned to this page and a lady wrote in to the columnist and said, 'There are times that I just can't go on and I feel like giving up. My life is overwhelming and I just can't meet every expectation that I need to meet.' It was almost like I wrote it myself but I didn't. The writer responded, 'Philippians 4:13. You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength,' then wrote a whole. . . and I have chills just thinking about it. . . wrote a whole encouraging piece on building up this person, it was like God had sent that thing for me to read. From that point on I got stronger and I said, 'I gonna do it. God did not bring me this far not to finish and so I'm going to do this.' That was the big moment. I can say that was the turnaround point where I never wanted to give up again."

When reflecting on that time and in telling the story, Angela realized that the incident was a critical incident which was affected by her spiritual beliefs.

Participant 3-Aminah

"I knew that, at some point in time, this [doctorate] would make a difference in my life." Aminah was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2004 after 6 years of study at a large, public institution in the Southwest. Her specialization area was Multicultural Education. She had taught elementary school in a Midwest, urban school district before undertaking doctoral studies at age 30. She, too, chose to pursue her studies full-time and shared this response when asked about making the decision to

relocate for graduate school. "I said, 'What I need to do then is decide. . .I need to go back to school.' So I talked around to my grandmother, and she said, 'Go to law school, go to law school.' And I was like, 'I don't want to be an attorney.' You know, there's nothing wrong with that, but that's not my desire. My best friend, who was also a teacher, she wanted to go to medical school—that was always her dream. So she said, 'Let's go to medical school, well, let's start taking these courses, just as the prep work so we can get ready for the MCAT and everything.' I said, 'Okay.' So I did that, actually, for a summer and a semester, but it was just, you know, there's so much sacrifice in anything you do, you know. . .a doctoral program, medical school. . .it's a tremendous amount of sacrifice, and it was too much for that not to be my dream, because medical school was never my dream. [...] and I decided. . .I said 'Well, I'm in Education, and I've been an educator.' I know that we get into this when we talk about what our calling is. . .I knew that that was my calling because that was something that I was gifted in. So, not knowing what I was going to do with the degree, I knew that I would not lose anything by having the degree. I knew that, at some point in time, this would make a difference in my life. So that's how I came to enter a doctoral program."

In response to being asked about her adjustment to a new city and an institution with a very different demographic make-up, she stated: "There were more minority people, you know, brown people than white people. Hispanics and Native Americans, and it makes a difference in the climate, in my opinion. People were much more accepting and more progressive there." Though progressive, the new environment in which Aminah was living as a single African American woman was also somewhat of a

dilemma. "It was not someplace that I could live [long-term], and I knew that also, soon after I got there. I knew that going, really, because I was certainly aware that the African American population in the entire state is miniscule. But that was okay. What became a problem for me was in dating. I would say that there were 10 Black men in the state [laughs]. The pool was so small. . .they might not like Black women, and that's my preference [Black men], so that put me in a bad place. Also, there were things that were difficult at times to be in [the state] because. . .just small things that I'd never considered before. If there was an exhibit that was traveling, it didn't come to [the state]. If it was cultural, African American, it didn't come to [the state]. If there was a concert, they don't come to [the state]. So there were those sorts of things. There was so much to see culturally that I absolutely loved, and that was one of the reasons that I went there. But when you think about it, I guess, if you think about more back home, getting to your [culture], that wasn't there, and that was hard."

Although she was single, Aminah was the guardian of her nieces. She took on the responsibility of caring for the two children as a result of a family crisis that could have resulted in the family being separated had she not stepped in. They came to live with her after her first year in the doctoral program. The family lived in an off-campus, income-restricted apartment, which was affordable to Aminah as a graduate assistant. Meeting financial obligations was a challenge. However, knowing that she had to repay student loans that she had borrowed to go to school was one thing that prompted Aminah to persist and earn the doctorate. She pointed out: "I had a graduate assistantship. My degree was financed through loans. I had the children, so my loans were maxed out

every semester. I had nearly $100,000 in student loans. I knew that I had to get the degree. We got food stamps, and a little cash assistance from the state. My family was not able to help me [financially] at all. As far as academic adjustment to doctoral studies was concerned, Aminah felt confident in her abilities as a student, but had difficulty "opening up" and sharing with others. She recalled: "I always felt that I could do this. I was always told that you're smart, you know, you're as smart as the people in your class. So I always knew that. I was confident. But I'm still a person who. . .I really. . .I would [censor] my thoughts and my ideas. So in a conversation in class, I wouldn't share my thoughts. I just didn't, because my experiences so many times have been different, in life, in general, but in classes when you are in an environment when you are. . .you know, I don't care where you are. You're in a class of 30 people, and maybe one or two Black women in a class [...]. And you know, when you're talking about issues of equity and these things are discussed, and you have an entirely different perspective, and you're sure what your perspective is, and you're not understood, of course, you don't want to talk about it. So I would feel [...] because I don't want to get myself upset about something when I'm already angry, because it's not going to change. And so, I said. . .I had shut down. I thought, 'I am here to get my degree.'"

Coursework enabled Aminah to grow as she was exposed to different ideologies and practices. She enjoyed the learning process and recalled: "There were people that were very. . .in terms of our professors. . .who were very traditional. And then we had a group of. . .basically the junior faculty. . .they were very progressive. So in taking their courses, I found that there were so many ideologies and so many things that had to do

with education that I had never even thought of, never been. . .never been exposed to. And I found that, it wasn't. . .I didn't find that to be. . .it didn't trouble me. Through other people, I met other faculty members. They really did change me. Some of the faculty that I met there. . .I really do feel like I got my voice back. What people would say when they would read my papers, they would say, 'Well, why don't you talk about this, because what you have to say *is* important.' That had never happened before." Her relationship with her advisor was good; however, Aminah ultimately changed dissertation advisors. She explained: "My advisor was a White male, who is a sweetheart. He wanted my research to move in a different direction. That's not what I wanted. After my chair was removed, things changed for me." This proved to be a critical event for Aminah, as she then felt that her research reflected her personal interests. This motivated her to move ahead with her research and fostered successful attainment of the doctorate. She also had the opportunity to teach on the college level during a summer fellowship program. The experience was influential in her ultimate decision to embark upon an academic career. When asked about additional support that she received while pursuing the Ph.D. degree, Aminah listed a bevy of sources including family, friends, classmates, her sorority sisters, pastor and church members. She also mentioned that she was a Holmes Scholar on her campus, but admitted that the program did not play a significant part during her time in school. She conceded that: "A good program requires more than an academic investment."

Aminah confessed that her doctoral matriculation did present some challenges. When asked how she handled the challenges, she shifted in her seat, looked down

pensively for a moment and responded this way: "I don't even know what to say. I handled them. Not necessarily well. I think I was depressed in school. I didn't feel like I had anybody. There were things on me that others couldn't understand. One of my dear friends, a White woman, couldn't understand. I was in graduate school and taking care of the girls. I remember I turned in a paper that was pitiful, but it was the best that I could do. My schoolwork suffered. I didn't have a social life. People just don't understand the doctoral process. The spiritual community didn't give me what I needed either. It wasn't prayer that got me through; it was grace and mercy. I asked the Lord, 'Why do I have to deal with all my challenges?' There was nothing in me that made me the woman who could finish the doctorate versus the woman who jumped off the side of the bridge."

Aminah offered the following advice for other African American women pursuing the doctorate. "Find something of interest to you. Find out where the scholars in that area are and go there. Read the literature. Ask people what to do. Do the research up front. When you get to your campus, find faculty members and people who are willing to invest in you, not a research topic. If not, you could languish in that place forever. As a Black woman, know that you can do it and that there are so many people who have done it. Seek out those people because they want to help you. 'You have not because you ask not.' Get with another Black woman in the academy. They will be there for you even if they don't know you. Be true to yourself in thinking about your research agenda. This is true for life, in general. Define who you are and be who you are.

Participant 4-Madison

"I went into it thinking that it would be an academic journey, but it really was a spiritual journey." Madison began her doctoral studies at the age of 25, and graduated with a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision at age 29 in 2005. Since her undergraduate years at an HBCU, which was renowned for its teacher preparation, she knew that she wanted to be an educator. She shared: "I remember telling my mother that I had changed my major to Education. I told her that I would not become a medical doctor, but I would become a doctor one day and do a dissertation." The decision to pursue a doctorate was further influenced by interactions with professors and doctoral students who matriculated at the institution that she attended. Madison stated: "I had several professors at my university that encouraged me to get my doctorate. At that time, I said, 'No, no, no, I really want to work for 2 years and hands on and make a difference with children,' and they told me that I could have more of an impact if I worked at a university, with having a doctorate because I would be teaching those who would go out and impact the system. Another thing was. . .I can remember working as a school counselor and attending a conference at which there were students. . . there were African American students that presented at the conference on being a doctoral student of color. Being a doctoral student, *Doctoral Students of Color*, I think that was the presentation title. And I became interested then because those were actual students that were attending a doctoral program in my state and by having opportunities to ask questions; and they could talk about the doctoral experience and how they were able to logistically work it out. And so at the time I thought, Hey! That's when I made a conscious decision

that I am going to. It was something that I wanted to do and it was something that is attainable. I actually had the opportunity to talk to doctoral students who were at the university in my state."

Madison went on to say that she chose her doctoral institution based on several factors including the prestige of the university, the reputation of the counselor education program and the overall impression she got from the academic department. Even though she was happy about her school decision, there were still adjustment issues. She asserted: "It was a huge adjustment. The main one, being honest, was financial. That was a big adjustment for me. Even though I was single, no children, and this was a big factor for me deciding on, going ahead and doing it. I left my full-time position working in the school system which was approximately 3½ hours away from my institution. I was leaving master's pay tenure, which was approximately maybe a $6,000 increase and health insurance. All that, to go be a full-time student. So that was hard, the financial adjustment was the biggest one for me, at the time trying to find fellowships, trying to find ways to pay for my education, as well as my living expenses, for 3 years as a full-time student. So that was probably, for me, the biggest adjustment to make. No insurance, no working, going from being a working professional back to being a college student, a poor college student [laughing]. I did the poor college student thing before, but this is after working. Financial challenges. . .it was very difficult to try to attend different conferences and being able to support myself A lot of times, I had to rely on taking out additional loans. A lot of times for conferences, even though maybe the Graduate School or the College of Education would reimburse me, it was having the initial money to put

up. . .to have the money to put on credit cards. I didn't have one, but I had to get a credit card to have that initial funding in order to attend a conference, in order to be reimbursed later on."

In spite of the financial hardship, Madison persisted and received support from an influential person. She credits her advisor with being an essential factor in her success. Her advisor provided academic, financial and social resources for her. She stated: "I would say the key, the critical point for me completing my doctoral studies and the key to me wanting to complete my doctoral studies and actually having the support that I had was my advisor, who is my mentor, she was my advisor, she was on my committee, mentor and she is now actually a very close friend of mine. And that was a faculty member at my institution. Well, when I first started my program, I applied for a grant at our university and I did not receive it. That was before I met my advisor. So I actually had to work in residential life as a hall director because it provided me with housing, and also I received a small stipend and it paid for my bills and that type of thing. So I started off and started through that my first year. Once I met my advisor and talked with her, she told me about the graduate assistantship in which I could work with her and she's an administrator in higher education plus she works as a faculty member in our department, so her graduate assistantship was actually more than the typical one provided by our department. I think a couple thousand dollars more. That was helpful. Then, when I told her I did not receive the grant, she told me to apply again and she was able to connect me with the correct people and so then I received the grant which provided me with additional funding. She was able to give me more information, in particular within

our department. She was instrumental in my becoming a Holmes Scholar. She was key to completing my doctoral program. She provided me with a graduate research assistantship. She provided me with opportunities to do research, mentoring, presentations, all of that. Support. She was there with spiritual support, there were a lot of things that went beyond being purely academic. We still had a very professional relationship. We weren't friends at the time, but she supported me. So much so, that as far as me even knowing about the Holmes Scholars Program, which was a huge support, as well. The best thing about my doctoral program, I would say two things, my advisor and the Holmes Scholars. Those are two components that were the best things about my doctoral program. Those are the things that I really talk about, support at my institution and telling students that they really can go ahead and do it. At the time when I was toward the end of finishing my program, it was my advisor who told me that I was kind of slacking in doing the dissertation process. I had finished my coursework and I was lagging behind and trying to do the writing and all that. She told me. . . she said, 'Look! You have got to finish.' Then I found out that I was pregnant. So she said, [emphatically]'I don't care! You, me and that baby are gonna walk around and down until you walk across that stage.' She was just as determined about me finishing and motivating me, as well. And it was at that time that I just got on the ball. I was able to finish. I graduated August 8th. I had my baby August 24th. She was really helpful and supportive in that sense. I cannot say it was just my advisor, but I had that family support system, I think, too, with Dr. R., being my mentor and role model, I think her commitment went beyond just academic and personal. It helped me get through the

doctoral program. Her spiritual support and the encouragement and letting me know that I could do the writing to attain this. There were points where I felt I was doubting myself throughout my doctoral program. And she was there with that. That was just the reason why I finished."

Madison's family also offered her a great deal of encouragement and support as she went through school. She believed that this support was also critical to her success. She acknowledged: "I would have to say my immediate family, meaning my mother and my sister, were very supportive. My mother was very supportive. My father. . .uuhh, I guess his thing was about the money. 'Why are you leaving your job?' My mother stood by me the whole time. My mother and sister would come visit me when I was living in [the university town]. They would talk to me all the time, pray with me, encourage me even though they had not gotten doctorates. They were learning about the process along with me. So, they were very interested, asking me about what was going on, what was the next step, how things were going. They were a huge support system as well."

When asked about networks or support systems among fellow students, Madison mentioned the Holmes Scholars Program a second time and shared how her experience with that organization led her to form a social support group on her campus. "The Holmes Scholars Program was a group that I connected with and there was a bond. After that summer [in Washington, D.C.] with the Holmes Summer Institute, I went back to my own campus and created a group of African American females, all Education doctoral students. We were a local support and what we did was purely social and the reason was having an outlet for most of us, but it was academic support as well. We

would get together once or twice a semester and we would go out to dinner, go bowling, some type of social activity and during the process we would have an opportunity to talk with each other, talk about our different departments and talk about things going on with our studies and work. It ended up having the opportunity to talk to each other and assuring each other that nobody understands what we are going through unless you are going through the doctoral process. It was a great family. . .by having the opportunity and by having my friends, my sisters in the Holmes Scholars Program, as well as the group that I started at my university."

Like other study participants, Madison also found herself faced with obstacles and hindrances in the forms of self-doubt and negative thinking. She harkened back to some of the difficult times: 'Well, I recall my first class that I had was a class that I wrote my first manuscript that was totally slammed by one of the professors. And I think it really hurt my self-esteem. Previously, while growing up, I felt very confident about my academic ability. From elementary school on up, throughout college, being the top education student, I felt confident. I could do it. I think the first challenge, for me, was actually having my work rejected. That first class was truly difficult for me. Working with the professor, trying to understand her expectations and what she wanted and the way to improve my writing, that was my first challenge. So, after that initial class, working with that professor that was the first challenge and then I was the one. It was me. I was the problem. There again, was my advisor. My advisor stepped in. I talked to her just a little bit because I didn't know her really well at the time. All the professors provide each student with evaluations on their progress. One of the things that I was told

was to continue working on my writing as far as doing research and publications. I think at that moment after hearing that, I was confident in my writing. For my advisor to support me and tell me 'There's nothing wrong with your writing. I've looked at it and read it,' and for the department to say, 'There's nothing wrong, we just want you to do more.' After my initial evaluation, at that time, the department said, 'We're very proud of the progress you're making.' I think that was the last evaluation that I received from the department. They said that they were proud of the writing I had done. They complimented me on it and it did help as far as my dissertation. But at first, that was something that was very challenging to me. I may not have always said it to other people, but it was always something in the back of my mind, since that first class and the challenge of working with that particular professor. Throughout my program I had insecurities about my writing. I had that negative mindset and then the dissertation process became difficult because I was so concerned about my writing, then my advisor had to step up and say, 'Look, there is nothing wrong, you just do it. Get something down on the paper and we'll worry about the revisions. You're going to have to do the revisions. The comments could be for anybody. No one turns in a dissertation or chapter that is perfect. This is a part of the process'. . .for myself, that was a challenge. . .writing and getting done with the dissertation."

Aside from academic challenges, Madison also spoke about the dichotomy between the climate of her department and that of the university. With a look of frustration on her face, she confirmed that the issue of racism was a factor on her campus. "My department was very supportive of multicultural issues and diversity, but the

university was not. So, it was fine operating in our department, but the university as a whole was not as supportive. We had an incident when I was a hall director, where one of the White male fraternities had a Halloween party where they berated a Black fraternity and dressed in blackface and put a noose around someone's neck. The pictures [from the party] came out making a mockery of [the Black fraternity]. At the time, I was a hall director and a couple of my residents actually attended the party. That was difficult dealing with that because of knowing how the university dealt with the situation. Of course, I thought the punishment should have been a lot harsher. In working with the undergrad students and teams in rallies and working for the university with diversity forums and brown bags, all of that, this was just a wake up call for me to know where I was. My department was very open to multicultural issues and diversity but the university itself was not, so that was something I realized."

Faith in God and spirituality were also coping mechanisms for Madison. She offered "lots of prayer" as a suggestion for others in pursuit of a Ph.D. As a parting thought, she stated: "I tell people all the time that I went into it thinking that it would be an academic journey, but it really was a spiritual journey. Personally, for myself, for anyone who believes in a higher being, I am a Christian, but for someone else, they should have a spiritual life. It's important, as well. That was the motivation. You can't always talk to somebody. You can't always talk to your mother, your sister, etc. But in my case, I felt like someone who was always there for me and who understood what I was going through and provided the help was God. For that fact, I knew things would work out."

Participant 5-Denise

"The key to getting through graduate school successfully is knowing when to sit back and knowing when to step it up." When Denise visited the campus of the institution that would later award her the Master of Education and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Educational Policy Studies, she felt that the school was a good "fit" for her and that she would be successful in her academic endeavors. Only a few days before, the course for her life was quite different and did not include graduate school. She recounted her experience and shared: "The honest answer. I never wanted to go to graduate school. I had sort of a difficult undergraduate experience in some regards. Not academically, I was always academically successful, but really finding somewhere that I had a good fit in. I transferred institutions several times and I changed majors several times. I was burned out from school, even though I graduated in 4 years. I didn't want to go to graduate school. I applied under duress to make them [undergraduate/pre-doctoral advisor and professors] happy. I wasn't going to go to graduate school unless I got fellowship money. Then the fellowship money came in and hit me like a rocket and I was like, Okay. You can go to graduate school for free and they are going to pay you to do! How are you going to just walk away from that? This was in March or April. The deadlines are always April 15th and I was really torn. I hadn't visited the campus. I thought to myself, that maybe I was supposed to stay at my undergraduate institution and do the family social science thing [undergraduate major]. My advisor said, 'You cannot make this decision.' The fellowship at my undergraduate school was 1 year. The school where I ended up getting the doctorate was 3 years. mmm. . .3 years tuition, plus they were

going to give me $15,000 for 3 years. That was a whole lot of money. My advisor said, 'You can't turn that down without seeing the school.' It's like April 8th then. She [advisor] said, 'Come on. We are about to go.' She drove me to the campus from our campus in her own car on her dime. And we set up all these meetings with department heads. She [undergraduate advisor] set up appointments with current graduate students and I really got a chance to meet people at that institution, there was something about that, and at that point I felt that community, even though we were only there for a day and a half. We literally drove up, were there one day and then left. Something about it just said that it was a good fit and that I would be okay there. Once I felt that, I was alright. I really took a huge chance. I really hadn't done much research on the program. Educational Policy Studies wasn't something that I had investigated substantially. I really didn't even know what I was going to do with that degree. I think I can do it. It's not a matter of if I had the intellectual wherewithal to do it, but I just kind of did. I had to call the department head on April 15th and say, 'I put my letter in the mail today. I'm coming, don't give my fellowship away to anybody else.'" Denise's undergraduate/pre-doctoral advisor played a pivotal role in helping to change her career path. Her advisor had an interest and investment in the institution. Denise gratefully recollected her advisor's persistence and revealed that her advisor was an alumna of the institution and the program to which she sought admission. "She [advisor] felt that I would be a good fit there and she was right. I'm just really glad that I trusted her. I probably would not have gone to graduate school. I was working at [a well-known insurance company] at the time and I felt like that was a pretty good job. I was working part-time and I was going to and

transfer into their public affairs department and do public affairs for [the insurance company.] Yeah. I look where I am today" [smiling].

Denise attributed her positive doctoral experience to the various forms of support she received from her cohort group members, faculty and other members of the university community. "I feel like I received a lot of support from my cohorts and other students in the program. Initially, there was a little bit of. . .not tension, but I was a little bit. . . it took me a little bit more time to adjust to the social scene there, but once I did I was fine. But just the support my colleagues in the program, was really phenomenal, as well professors in the department. I think what made that transition so easy I was speaking of before was that the professors really sort of made, well blurred the line between their academic role and social role. I don't know if social role is the right word, but opening up their homes to us. Creating a community or creating really a family environment where I felt like these people really cared about me as a person not just turning me out or helping me get a Ph.D., or not getting a Ph.D. I guess which some people's experience might be like they didn't care if I got a Ph.D. or not. I felt like this community of people was invested in me as a person getting in this program and getting a Ph.D. Cause graduate school is not easy and that community of support, whether it be financial or social or academic or whatever, was always there from that community."

Denise was very involved with departmental and campus activities and affiliated with different groups almost immediately after arriving. She conveyed the message that she felt welcomed in the "community of scholars" and that the experience was in stark contrast to her baccalaureate degree program. This was a welcomed contrast that aided in

a relatively smooth transition to the institution. "Uhh [sighing]. Graduate school was completely different from my undergraduate experience. I had pretty much since kindergarten attended predominantly White institutions. [At the university] my program of educational policy studies is predominantly of color, from the faculty to the students. So, to be in an environment where all of my colleagues were all students of color was completely different from my experiences. Instead of being the only Black student in my classes, I would be in a room where there was only one White student. I had basically an entire social network in graduate school that was comprised of students of color, so a completely different social experience. Academically, I felt like I was prepared so my adjustment in that regard was not difficult. It was certainly challenging to keep up with the reading and everything but I was really passionate about the classes I was taking from the jump. So I was excited about doing the work. That wasn't a difficult transition. It certainly was a different transition for the better. You know it was a good transition to adjust to that social component of graduate school that wasn't available during my undergraduate years."

Denise was involved in a number of campus organizations during her time in graduate school. Involvement in the activities helped Denise's adjustment to her department and at the school. She felt that the involvement built her confidence, forged strong and helpful relationships, and helped maximize her graduate school experiences. Working in various capacities also enabled her to repay her department and the school for the assistance and opportunities provided to her. It also enabled her to work within

existing groups and organize a new group, which she felt met some of the needs of minority students.

Along with the social and academic integration afforded by participation in campus organizations, Denise discussed the importance of knowing how to act and what to do in various situations during graduate school. She specifically addressed the importance of taking ownership in the learning process and positively interacting with professors as helpful steps toward program completion. "I think that successful students strike a balance between being humble and being assertive. There are people who have been doing this for a very long time. They know what they are doing. You kind of need to sit back and absorb the information that they are giving to you. There's a piece to that that involves being a good learner about approaching your education and being reverent for the people in your department who have a lot of wisdom. But then there's another piece to it with being assertive and coming up with a plan. When you implement what your plan is for graduate school, it is and how you will get through it and being concrete about it. The backside to that is that there are students who play those things in nonsupportive ways. You can be too assertive. I can point to several people who have that biting edge, who feel like they know everything already and are in your face with information about any number of things. You know, those students who are a little bit too assertive and feel like they know more than they do because they are just starting out. Then there are those who aren't assertive enough and expect the professors in the department are going to just take them through this process, are going to provide them with financial support, are going to tell them when to publish, or tell them what outside

reading to do, or whatever. That's a precarious situation. You have to be on your game and come up with your own plan and instead of saying, 'What should I do?' say, 'This is what I have been doing. This is what I plan to do in the future. How does that sound?' It's infinitely easier. I think the key to getting through graduate school successfully is knowing when to sit back and knowing when to step it up."

Participant 6-Vanessa

"I think for women, they really need to consider what price they're willing to pay to do something like this." Vanessa was a wife and mother of two when she decided to pursue her doctorate full-time. She had returned to school to pursue her baccalaureate degree as a nontraditional student. After completing a teacher preparation program at an urban university, she entered the teaching profession as a secondary science teacher. Throughout her public school teaching career, Vanessa realized that she had an intrinsic desire to learn more and to teach others how to be teachers. She recalled: "While I was in my undergrad program, I first decided that I wanted to be a person who taught folks how to teach. One of my instructors, who was also my advisor, seemed to really love what he was doing and he had such an impact on me that I thought, 'You know, I would like to do this one day.' And in addition to that, as I kept on teaching, I realized that I needed to know more and because of that, I knew I had to go back to school." Having worked as a public school science teacher, she chose science education as her area of study. Reflecting back on factors that motivated her to leave her job and matriculate on the master's and doctoral levels full-time, Vanessa stated: "My mentor called me that January of 1998 and he said 'I have an offer you can't refuse.' He offered me to come

back to the institution that I'd gotten my undergraduate degree to get my master's with tuition and stipend with the intention of completing a Ph.D. once that was done. So he basically he said, 'If you are willing to go all the way, we'd be willing to support you through a master's program.' And what it meant was that I would have to stop working because I was going to be also teaching a class the second semester and I would go to school full-time. So I took him up on the offer. I think knowing that I had the support to complete the master's and him saying, 'If you go ahead and finish that Ph.D., then you have a chance of coming back here to work with me.' The only thing was that I couldn't do it at my undergraduate institution because they really didn't have the program. I didn't want to have to pull up stakes and go elsewhere, and there was a school in the state where I could do it that wasn't too far away. So it seemed possible, I think, more than anything else. I think I did a lot of this on faith. I knew I needed to make a change, so all of the factors came together and I kind of jumped at the chance to do this." Vanessa was 1 of the 2 study participants who acknowledged having a mentor prior to beginning doctoral studies. The support of her mentor, a Caucasian male, served as a motivational factor as she returned to school. Despite this support, she did have to make adjustments in several areas. The areas included family life and time management. She reported: "I liked school, so it wasn't that big of a deal going back to school. It was a big deal refocusing myself. I was no longer in the classroom. I had to learn how to manage my time as a graduate student and I think I learned pretty fast. My family had to adjust to the fact that school demanded a lot of my time."

Support was critical to Vanessa's success. She discussed financial and family support and their importance in her success. She also discussed the lack of academic support offered by the first of two academic advisors during her doctoral pursuit. She recalled: "The financial support was excellent. . .there were issues with other support. One of the issues of starting at the time was that my major professor, who was also my advisor, was near the end of his career. He was getting ready to retire. He was not an active researcher. He didn't have any projects going at the time. He was not writing. So I didn't have a person that I worked closely with as an example of how I could be as a researcher because, I mean, first and foremost, I wanted to be a science education researcher. If I wanted to teach, I could've stayed in the classroom." Vanessa sought to gain not only college teaching experience as a doctoral student, but writing and publication opportunities, as well. It was this goal that prompted her to seek another advisor. After switching advisors, Vanessa was able to move through her coursework while working with a supportive faculty member on a research grant. She was able to co-author several publications with her professor, but reflected on not being able to accomplish more. She offered: "What I realized was I had to work with the people who I thought would give me the kind of support I needed. You also need to work with folks who are serious about their work. Midway in my program, I did change advisors because I realized I couldn't. . .my advisor was retiring and that was one issue and I had to get this dissertation done. The first advisor wasn't an active researcher. The second advisor was a researcher, but what she was working on really had nothing to do with what I was interested in. In good Ph.D. programs, you're generating publishable work while you're

in your program. That wasn't happening for me. I did work with her on one piece and I was a third author on something, and then I was a fourth author on a chapter in a book, but I really didn't have any productivity in terms of my scholarship from any of the work I did in that program. And that is a detriment, and I would tell anybody, if you're going into a Ph.D. program, you need to look at the most productive of researchers whose coattails you're going to ride on, but also someone who you could fit your interests in with also."

In terms of challenges or obstacles she faced during her graduate studies, Vanessa cited returning to school after a long period of time, family adjustment and working with her advisor. However, she also alluded to the fact that there was some discomfort with the institutional environment at her university, an institution which has had a long history of discrimination against women and minorities. When asked to elaborate on her adjustment and to share suggestions for others seeking to form campus relationships, she shared: "For the first couple of semesters, I felt so out of place at [the university]. It was so very White and there were still people there making statements about, 'I remember when people like you couldn't be here.' But at the same time, I was like, 'Hell, I'm here.' People who looked like me made it possible for them folks to be here, you know. So you have to kind of take on a kind of armor, especially when you're in a majority institution, and I'll be honest with you, sometimes it's the best place to be to get what you want." When asked if she experienced discrimination, she replied: "I think the discrimination I experienced was based on my race and my perceived income status."

After listening to her responses during a participant review, Vanessa addressed the issue of sacrifice as related to doctoral pursuit. She specifically shared issues that she felt are pertinent to women who may be interested in pursuing the doctorate. This is what she said: "I think for women, they really need to consider what price they're willing to pay to do something like this. I look at other folks who tried to do this the way I did it, and they were not successful. It really helps having a husband who is totally supportive, but at the same time, I also kept in mind that I wanted to have my family when I was done. A Ph.D., you can't sleep with it at night, even though there were times when I slept with my books [laughs]. They're not the people who will sit down to dinner with you. So you really do need to make some decisions, and sometimes it might mean not doing it until the time is better. I see several women and I ache for them who are going through a program. . .I'm calling a couple to mind who have fairly young children, who have really demanding jobs and I'm like, you can't do all of this stuff at once. So it might mean not having a very nice car. It might mean really severely cutting back on how you spend money. You can't have everything and still want to go through a Ph.D. program and maybe in our society, we tend to lose sight of that. You have to give up some stuff. You cannot give up your family, number one, so you've gotta give up some of the other trappings. And we need to learn how to do that. We need to be willing to say, 'Let me get that out the way.'"

Participant 7-Ennad

"If I had had a clearer understanding of why I wanted the degree and what I wanted to take away from it, it might have been an easier experience." Ennad was a

public school teacher with more than 12 years of professional experience in a large, urban school district in the Northeast. She decided to obtain a doctorate with the ultimate goal of impacting school curriculum reform. She recalled that her motivation was spawned by her disillusionment with the educational process in her school system. She stated: "I became a bit jaded with some of the things that were happening in my school district. I had been teaching in [the school district] for maybe 11 or 12 years, and around the time of major educational reform. I felt that I didn't need a lot of the structure and guidance to tell me what to do in my classroom. But then, in trying to be responsive, a number of my colleagues responded in ways that were not always favorable, especially to children. So, rather than hang around and vent and be uncomfortable and unhappy in my work space, I decided to take some of this energy and [...] possibly return to the classroom so that I could help teachers understand the purpose of curriculum standards and how to take that information and inform the process."

Initially, Ennad had applied to a doctoral program at an institution in her hometown and was rejected. She recalled: "I started in 1999. I applied to a doctoral program maybe a year or two before that. . .maybe it was the year before. . .not at the same institution, and I was outright rejected. I didn't want to feel defeated, so I took a course. . .I was working my professional development courses. As a teacher you need to keep current with that stuff. I took a course at [doctoral institution] and had a pretty positive experience. I decided that I would apply to. . .and I felt very comfortable with the way I understood the school's mission, its location and proximity to my home. . .I didn't feel that it would be a major adjustment for me, geographically. I also felt that,

because I was tenured in the school district I knew that I would be able to leave and still have my position. The school seemed like a really good fit. I only applied to that one school [her second time applying to a doctoral program], and I felt like I was going to be there, and I was able to get in."

When asked to talk about her adjustment to the institution, Ennad immediately focused on her social adjustment. She said: "Socially, the adjustment pertained to culture and getting along. [Her city] does not have a great presence of color. Most of my friends, however, look like me and lived in the community where I lived. But when I went to university, I was the only person of color in my cohort group. There were 11 or 12 people, and I was the only person of color. Many times. . .wherever I am, I'm always looking for myself. . .so after we had been accepted, we were in a really large room and everyone who had been accepted into the graduate studies, master's students and doctoral students, were all in one large space, then grouped by department. So you had Curriculum and Instruction, Ed. Psychology. . .and I was just kind of looking for my group in this large area. I saw some people [of color], but when it was time to group by department, I was the only person of color in my group. Just listening to people's stories about why they decided to participate or go back to school, and what they were bringing. I was thinking, 'I don't have anything in common with these folks.' So I just thought it would be another experience of me being the only one of color, so how. . .not necessarily how would it feel, but it was just that it was part of my experience, so I already knew how to adjust. I kind of decided, but maybe I didn't articulate this until a few weeks later. . .but any intention of identifying a potential mate [laughs] was also reduced

because my preference is for African American men, and there weren't any. So I thought, socially, I'll just be spending a lot of time with White females. So that was part of that adjustment."

A critical event that occurred as a precursor to Ennad's matriculation was the death of her father the previous winter. She solemnly recalled: "I was thinking that the acceptance into the program was my spring time, or an opportunity for me to move forward, because I was really close to my father. So after one loss just a few months earlier, I received some type of blessing or a positive just a few months after that experience. So that was my opportunity to move forward and find some way to make a negative situation a positive situation, with the death of my dad and going to a new growth for myself."

Once enrolled in the Curriculum and Instruction doctoral program, the kind gesture of a classmate during the initial stage of Ennad's matriculation turned out to be another critical incident, which ultimately impacted her success. She reflected on the incident in this statement: "I do recall one woman who became very instrumental in my program and in my progress said to me, and I didn't remember this so much during the orientation, but she looked around and noticed that I was the only person of color and so felt compelled to befriend me. And I'm thinking, 'Oh, that's kind of nice.' I really didn't ask for all of that [laughs], but if she felt that that's what she needed to do, then okay. I guess in hindsight, I was very appreciative of that because down the line, 1 or 2 months out of submitting the dissertation so that I could graduate, she was there to help me with transcription, editing and all those kinds of things. Not really recognizing how

instrumental that relationship would be, you know, it kind of came about that way. So, socially, this woman, and then there was another, [we] decided that we would take courses together, we would study together, and we were starting at the same time, so we'd all finish at the same time. People got used to seeing the three of us together, and we led very, very, very different lives. The woman who befriended me came out in one of our classes, and I remember thinking, 'Wow, I have a lesbian friend!' That was a new experience for me. And then the other person was married, and had been married for about 8 or 9 years, and was trying to start a family. Both of them were of European descent, so we were all coming from very different experiences, but they were my support system."

The academic and social support that her two classmates provided was a factor that Ennad attributed to her success. She also reported that academic and social support was offered by a professor of color, to whom she was introduced by a classmate. "There was a sister from Argentina who was just very. . .I think she meant well, but was just very. . .busy and forthcoming with advice and telling us what we needed to do. I think I was talking to her about feeling sometimes culturally isolated. She took our conversation and went to one of the faculty members of color, and I don't know what she said, but a couple of days later I got an email from the faculty member saying, 'We need to talk.' So I said, 'Okay, let's talk.' So I went to her office and she closed the door. I was thinking that this was some really serious stuff when we closed the door [laughs]. She just wanted to extend herself to me, and I was appreciative of that because the faculty

member, a Black woman. . .I did not have her for any courses, and I think it's nice that she felt that she could extend herself to me in that way."

Social and academic support was important and helpful. However, financial support from her institution was a source of concern. It wasn't until her second year in her doctoral program that Ennad felt she was excluded from fellowship offerings. Her tuition and fees were paid with funds from an assistantship, a student loan and a grant. She reflected on her reaction in learning that she was in the minority for students not receiving fellowships. Ennad stated: "I was a bit concerned to learn that most, if not all the doctoral students in my program—I'm not sure if it was throughout the college—had fellowships. Well, I'm thinking, 'I don't have a fellowship. How come everybody was able to hook up with a fellowship, and I didn't get one?'" The response she got from a faculty member about fellowship awards was not any more encouraging in Ennad's eyes. Yet, she persisted despite doubt about her department's commitment and belief in her, and feeling left out. "I thought I heard from this faculty member that perhaps given that academic record, and what they knew of the rigors of the program, that it might be okay to let me in, but they were not really convinced of my success in the program. And, again, that's just how I was reading things and how I interpreted them. And I was thinking, 'Well, that must have been why I didn't get offered the $25,000 for the 4 or 5 years of the program.' When I learned that I was. . . you know, I felt a bit slighted, but my brother reminded me that it doesn't really matter how you get to the table, you're at the table. And I was clearly there. And I was really determined to finish in a timely manner and move forward."

Family and community support were mentioned several times throughout the interview. Ennad credited her mother, brother, sorority sisters, church members and other family friends with offering encouragement in the way of kind words, suggestions and advice. Ennad's mother, a former teacher, tried to offer academic support in addition to providing housing, meals and a nurturing environment, which was external to her campus experiences. Ennad shared specific ways in which her mother made efforts to facilitate her successful completion of the doctorate. "We [her family] had been in this house since 1965, so I moved from this bedroom that I had been in since I was 2, and I was well into my 30s at the time, and I moved into the attic, and renovated the bedroom. I knew that I would need a study, so I converted my play room into a study. My mom was very supportive of that. Then I set myself up with a schedule to do reading, then to get my writing together, and all of that. There were many times when my colleagues weren't giving me specific support with the writing. . .Mom wanted to help, so I'd ask her for support. Initially, she'd say, you know, 'Your vocabulary has changed and I don't know what all these words mean! I need a dictionary to read it!' So initially, she was somewhat helpful, but then, unfortunately, because I was giving her too much work or she wasn't interested or the novelty had waned, from her perspective, everything was just nice. So then I knew I needed to go outside the family for academic support."

A third significant occurrence that served as a critical event for Ennad was a dissertation fellowship. She received the dissertation writing fellowship, which allowed her to teach one class and write her dissertation full-time. Her host institution was a small, private college in the Northeast. This opportunity aided the successful completion

of Ennad's dissertation and offered her a chance to enjoy the dual experience of being a student and faculty member. Her account of the dissertation fellowship year is relived below.

"Probably around the time that I learned everybody else of color at [the university] was getting a free ride and I wasn't, I wanted to find some type of support or scholarship. And I also knew that. . .I felt that would enhance my dossier to get some type of fellowship. At the time, I think, I had gone back to school [public school teaching]. So I was still trying to play the school thing, and wanted to hold on to my tenure there. I think they give you 2 years off, so I went back for 1 year. During that 1 year that I returned to the classroom, I applied for a dissertation fellowship. The opportunity was a great one in that it got me outside of [her city] for a year, and I was being paid to write my dissertation! I'm trying to remember the number. . .I think it was somewhere between $25,000 and $30,000. Granted, I wasn't buying a house with that amount, but for my needs, it allowed me to get food and get a room and some gas in my car, and all I was doing was writing anyhow. Also, part of the arrangement with the fellowship was that in addition to writing, which I was reminded of on every occasion, by every person that I saw. . .you know, 'How are you doing with the dissertation? Remember, that's why you're here. You need to get that dissertation finished.' That was a recurring message that I had in the back of my mind, that people were always telling me. I had the opportunity to teach one course. I wasn't certain about how I would approach that, with the fellowship. I didn't really have any opportunities to teach on the college level [at her doctoral institution]. At [the fellowship host institution] I had the

opportunity to teach a course, and because it was a very progressive institution, you designed your course, you named your course. I like curriculum, I like to plan and organize and pull things together. So what I did was built on. . . what drew from, the dissertation. My literature review, much of it became the reading assignments for the course. The title of the dissertation became the title of the course. We met, I believe, twice a week. I had 15 students in the class. It was a true growing experience for me because I learned that whatever images I had of being a professor or how a professor teaches—kind of just standing around and disseminating information and just kind of speaking—that just wasn't working."

Ennad stated that the experience of college teaching for a semester during her dissertation fellowship influenced her to pursue a faculty appointment upon obtaining her doctorate. She currently works as an assistant professor at a state-supported institution in the Northeast.

Participant 8-Anne-Marie

"You also realize that you are doing this not just for the ego of saying, 'I have a Ph.D.' or to get a little bit better job, but you can also use it to reach back to somebody in your community or in some other community." Anne-Marie is currently an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at an HBCU in the Southeast. She was the oldest of the eight study participants and took the longest amount of time, 9 years, to complete her program. When asked about her motivation for earning a doctorate, it was revealed that Anne-Marie's impetus was encouragement by colleagues and an intrinsic desire to expand her knowledge base. She felt that obtaining a doctorate would enable her to improve her

teaching and better facilitate the learning process for others. She told: "I had been encouraged many, many times by my peers, my colleagues and my supervisors to expand on my educational accomplishments to, in fact, pursue a Ph.D. I even had an opportunity to teach at the university but I was not able to do that because of other kinds of complications and responsibilities at that time. I always had an interest in doing that. It was also at the time that I had applied for a position as math coordinator for the school system on the island. I had kind of gotten the position but then some local politics entered the situation, as they often do, and they reversed the decision to make me math coordinator, so I said 'You know what? Let me go back and get my Ph.D.' I still had an interest in learning and growing and to improve my abilities as a teacher of mathematics."

Prior to matriculating full-time, Anne-Marie had been employed as a public school math teacher in several states and the Caribbean. Attending graduate school in an unfamiliar state required some adjustment. Nevertheless, Anne-Marie attributed her ease with adjustment to the community to her outgoing personality. She pointed out: "Those who know me, know that I am the type of person who will create a family around me."

Getting used to being back in school presented its own set of issues for Anne-Marie. As an older, nontraditional student, she struggled to become comfortable with balancing the rigorous coursework and teaching a class as a requirement for her graduate assistantship. Her recollection was this: "We had to teach a course and some of that kind of posed some challenges for me. Of all, I was a nontraditional student returning. I was in

my 40's. . . mid 40's, returning to the university. In many of my classes, well in some of my classes, since I was pursuing a masters equivalent and the Ph.D. at the same time in my master's classes, many of the students were much younger than myself and as such, many of them had had access to technology and instructional approaches that I hadn't availed myself to over some years. I had been teaching for 20-something years when I went back to pursue my Ph.D., so many of the students were a lot younger and so I had to kinda like play catch up. But I had the kind of spirit that that allowed me to do that. I, like many of my of my peers, had been trained and educated in the more traditional way of thinking about and doing mathematics. And here, I'm in a program that is really intense on trying to promote mathematics from a new viewpoint/orientation. That was not only new to me but it was a little difficult. There were a lot of little pieces that were missing."

Seeking academic assistance from her professors was something that Anne-Marie did without reservation in order to help her "catch up." Her professors were helpful and "wanted students to succeed". Faculty provided opportunities for Anne-Marie and her classmates to write published articles with them in addition to working on research grants. At her institution, faculty provided "a lot of support in getting through the program." Despite the supportive nature of the faculty, Anne-Marie realized that she had to take ownership of the doctoral process. This meant actively taking the lead and navigating herself through the process using the skills and resources that she had acquired.

Anne-Marie's classmates in her department served as a support network for her, as well. She was one of several students who formed an unofficial cohort, so to speak. This

group offered academic support and a social outlet. Anne-Marie stated: "By and by, we operated as a collective in many ways, probably because we took a lot of the Ph.D. level Math Ed. courses together. We had study groups and they really did help a lot. We would get together and read each others' papers and we would edit them. Sometimes you barely had time to write a paper and get it turned in, but whenever possible we did. In the math courses, study groups helped a lot. Minority students or nonminority students, we were all trying to get through that." Anne-Marie cited peer mentoring as a being "very, very important" and integral to her success. She also discussed her participation with the Black Graduate Student Association on her campus. This organizational involvement fostered social and academic and leadership development by way of conference attendance and presentations. "I later became the president of the Black Graduate Student Association and that particular organization provided quite a bit of support. We had research roundtables. We went to conferences where we could present our research and hear other minorities present their research and other minority professors and even mainstream professors."

When questioned about challenges she faced during her time in school, Anne-Marie acknowledged that she sought help from her peers and professors when school work was difficult for her. Managing her time and balancing school work with teaching duties was somewhat of a hindrance. Speaking of her duality as a student and an instructor, she reported: "I was kind of like learning and teaching at the same time, even though I had some support. Of course, I think it would have been helpful in one sense if I would have been able to have a semester or two without having to do that kind of graduate assistantship. One of my colleagues, from South Africa, in fact, was in a

program where he didn't have to do teaching for his assistantship. He was in his office, in his cubicle. We had cubicles. He was in his cubicle all the time working. He completed his program in a speedy manner. For those of us who had to work, it made it a little difficult. Then being nontraditional, I had a family. My daughter, by that time had come to stay with me and she was trying to get her education. There were personal things as well as just having to work made it real difficult for me. A couple of times, I found myself having to work at the local junior college to pay my bills, as a nontraditional student and to keep myself above board and I think having to do that kind of wore on me. I wasn't like some of the other students who had those big fellowships that took care of everything and they didn't have to work. I might have been able to get through a little quicker." Although she did not receive any one single fellowship that covered all expenses during her schooling, Anne-Marie did receive various scholarships and fellowships from her institution. She, like another study participant, Angela, was one of the first recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarship.

The community outside of the university also offered solace for Anne-Marie. There she attended church. She also formed friendships with professors from other departments on campus and often socialized with them off campus. She noted that she was closer in age to the faculty members than she was her classmates. One relationship was that of a mentor and mentee, as Anne-Marie explained: "I can say, the older group that I hung out with was very encouraging. There was one woman, she has passed on now, who was like a mentor to me. She would always push and encourage me in my process. 'Once you get through this, you can write your ticket. Everything will open up for you.' Providing a space for me

to go and study after I had left the area [moved to take a job ABD]. I did have that kind of support. That was strong support."

Anne-Marie disclosed that the dissertation process was difficult for her and that completing the dissertation was perhaps her greatest obstacle. During the writing process, Anne-Marie accepted a faculty position at an institution on the East Coast. She also remarried in the process of relocating. These incidents interrupted her writing and changed the dynamics with her dissertation chairperson and committee. She recounted the experience. "I left the university ABD [All But Dissertation] and I took a job at a mainstream university in the Southeast. I felt, and my dissertation chair felt, that we were pretty close to completing the dissertation and so she encouraged me, and gave me her blessings and her references and so did several other professors, gave me their references as I began to move into the job realm and I still had some writing to do. I guess I was getting mixed messages. On one hand, I was told 'You are just about finished and you only have this to do,' and that's what I felt was the case. But when I took a job elsewhere and was able to revisit and write my dissertation, then I began to get other messages. I know that they were going for quality, but I was going through my 'Rites of Passage' for that process. As I began to present my final chapters of my dissertation, I started getting all of this, what can I say. . . feedback that I hadn't gotten before. . .I think my professors wanted me to bite the bullet, make the sacrifice and not do all of that so that I could concentrate on my work because I didn't do that. Then, they withdrew their support a little bit." To overcome her dissertation completion obstacle, Anne-Marie devoted a period of time to working solely on her dissertation. Like Ennad, having a time set aside

to write was her strategy for finishing. Hosted by her mentor, Anne-Marie had a place and time to work. She shared: "It took me a period of actually 3 weeks to finish the writing of it. I went to sleep with it, I woke up with it. I thought about it. I re-read. I needed to have the time, when I wasn't thinking about my job [back East] or the situation with my daughter or just life things that you can't get away from. I just needed a good 3 weeks for me to get on it and actually finish it. It took a little longer than it should have taken on my part and also on the part of my dissertation committee."

Emergent Factors and Themes from Data Analysis

Research Question 1

What experiences and/or factors contributed to successful doctoral program completion of African American women in the field of Education? Participants attributed a variety of factors to their successful completion of the doctorate. Factors have been thematically categorized as personal, institutional or external. Table 2 is a listing of some responses regarding success factors by frequency. Each number indicates the number of participants that identified the factor at least once throughout the data collection process.

Research Question 2

What events and/or factors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion for African American women in the field of education? Participants identified a variety of events and factors as hindrances or obstacles to their successful completion of the doctorate. These events and factors have been thematically categorized as personal, academic/institutional and external. Table 3 lists some responses

Table 2

Success Factors for Doctoral Program Completion

Research Question #1: What experiences and/or factors contributed to successful doctoral program completion of African American women in the field of Education?

Success Factors		
Personal Factors	Institutional Factors	External Factors
Claimed ownership of doctoral process and articulated commitment to program (8)	Financial Support (7)	Social support (8)
Effective time management (5)	Participation in a community of scholars (7)	Family support (6)
Navigational and decision-making skills (5)	Academic support (5)	Spirituality (4)
Knowledge of self/self-confidence/purpose (5)	Ease of transition and adjustment to graduate school/institution (5)	
Time dedicated to writing (4)	Warm, nurturing environment (4)	
Viewed doctorate as empowerment tool (4)	Participation in campus and/or community activities (4)	
	Positive relationship with mentor/and or advisor (3)	

Note: Each number indicates the number of participants that identified the factor at least once.

Table 3

Hindrances or Obstacles to Doctoral Program Completion for African American Women in the Field of Education

Research Question 2: What events and/or factors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion for African American women in the field of Education?

Hindrances/Obstacles		
Personal Factors	Academic/Institutional Factors	External Factors
Isolation as a minority student (4)	Poor relationship with advisor (5)	Lack of support at critical times (3)
Length of time out of school before returning for doctorate (3)	Isolation as a minority student (3)	Rites of Passage/Dues paying (2)
Negative mindset/low self-confidence (2)	Difficulty with course work (3)	
Health issues/illness (2)	Lack of faculty of color (3)	
Financial debt (2)	Age (2)	
Lack of focus and purpose for degree pursuit (2)	Racism (2)	
	Lack of direction during dissertation process (2)	
	Lack of financial support (1)	
	Lack of research, presentation and publication experiences (1)	

Note: Each number indicates the number of participants that identified the factor at least once

regarding hindrances or obstacles by frequency. Each number indicates the number of participants that identified the factor at least once throughout the data collection process.

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings for the two research questions:

1. What experiences and/or factors contributed to successful doctoral program completion of African American women in the field of Education?

2. What events and/or factors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion for African American women in the field of Education?

Findings are presented as excerpts, listings and tables from participants' responses on an initial questionnaire, during interviews and follow-up questioning. Success factors for doctoral program completion for African American women in the field of Education were placed in three categories: (a) personal factors, (b) institutional factors, and (c) external factors.

Personal factors for successful doctoral attainment were ownership of doctoral process and an articulated commitment to one's program, effective time management, navigational and decision-making skills, knowledge of self/self confidence/purpose, time dedicated to writing, and view of doctorate as an empowerment tool. Institutional factors for success were financial support, participation in a community of scholars, academic support, ease of transition and adjustment to graduate school and the institution, warm and nurturing environment, participation in campus and/or community activities, and maintaining a positive relationship with a mentor and/or advisor. External factors that

influenced successful program completion were social support, family support and spirituality.

Hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion were divided into three categories: (a) personal factors, (b) academic/institutional factors, and (c) external factors.

Personal factors that were counted as hindrances included isolation as a minority student; length of time out of school before returning for the doctorate; negative mindset/low self-confidence; health issues/illness; financial debt, and lack of focus and purpose for degree pursuit. Hindrances or obstacles in the category of academic/institutional factors included poor relationship with advisor; isolation as a minority student; difficulty with coursework; lack of faculty of color; age; racism; lack of direction during dissertation process; lack of financial support; and lack of research, presentation and publication experiences. External factors that hindered doctoral completion were lack of support at critical times and rites of passage/dues paying. Interpretation and discussion of findings is found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The central foci of Chapter 5 are discussion and interpretation of findings, presentation of the researcher's theoretical model, study limitations, conclusions and recommendations.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Participants were asked to discuss support they received during their time in school. The Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) was the procedure that was used to prompt participants to think about problems and situations that they encountered and to talk about how each situation was handled. The realm or scope of support to discuss was left up to each individual. Responses fell within three domains: social support, academic support, and financial support. The variable of support was categorized in three domains in the earlier work of Gregory (2001) and Nichols and Tanksley (2004). When asked to elaborate on sources of support, Denise, a participant, stated, "I think it's social support, financial support and academic support. Those would be the three primary support mechanisms."

Social Support

All eight of the study participants (100%) stated that social support was crucial to their successful doctoral degree completion. Social support was broadly defined as encouragement, assistance, advocacy given by friends, family members, colleagues, clergy, mentors, advisors, administrators. Family support was mentioned by Madison as she stated, "They [her mother and sister] were a huge support system as well. I cannot say that it was just my advisor, but I had that family support system." Veronica's social support was also given by her spouse. She reported, "My husband was most supportive. He would help me by doing housework. If I had to do a paper, he would watch the kids, stuff like that." Sources of social support extended beyond biological families, as participants listed classmates, sorority sisters, family friends, and campus personnel as persons who offered encouragement in the way of kind words or cards. Aminah asserted that "to learn, you will get what you need wherever you go and you will create a network wherever you go. It wasn't necessarily hard to be away from my family because I had good friends there." Of her experience, Ennad said, "The support came in different ways and in different waves."

Another source of social and/or academic support was participants' memberships in organizations, activities and groups that were both campus and noncampus based. Five of the 8 participants in this study were chosen as Holmes Scholars during graduate matriculation. One was a Holmes Scholar during her master's program and the others during doctoral matriculation.

Four of the 5 spoke of the academic and social benefits of being affiliated with the Holmes Scholars Program. The fifth spoke of the scholar designation with pride, but lamented that she was unable to attend the Holmes Conference or form relationships with Holmes Scholars from other institutions. Consequently, she did not view the program as offering social or academic support to her. Two participants belonged to the National Black Graduate Student Association and saw the conference presentation and networking opportunities that the organization offered as helpful. Two reported that they started support groups on their respective campuses to meet the social and academic needs of minority students on their campuses. Four of the women are members of a national sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. The organization is dedicated to promoting educational development and networking for its members, who are predominantly African American women.

Interestingly, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, one of the first three Black American women to earn a Ph.D. in 1921, was a member and the first national president of the same organization (Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, 2006). For participants who are sorority members, sorority sisters provided support and encouragement for them. One participant recalled: "In my sorority, some of the women had their doctorates and when they knew that I was interested in the [doctoral] program, they of offered words of encouragement. A number of them actually gave me specific guidance and ideas on how to work the fellowship experience, so they were very, very helpful in that sense." Membership in networks associated with both campus and noncampus related groups empowered these women, as propagated by Lewis (2000).

Academic Support

In terms of academic support, participants relied on classmates as well as faculty members. One participant recalled, "I needed to go outside the family for academic support." More than half the participants conveyed the sentiment that "study groups helped a lot" and articulated that the formation of collegial groups with students, who could relate to the doctoral process, was a strategy they employed. Professors, who availed themselves for offering feedback on coursework and opportunities to conduct research, publish articles and present at professional conferences, were credited with being academically supportive.

A strong, positive relationship with a mentor and/or advisor is a second factor which is related to academic and social support. In several cases, the advisor and mentor were one and the same. For others, peer and faculty mentors offered advice, guidance and support. The importance of such relationships is reflected in the following statement by one participant who said, "The key for me wanting to complete my doctoral studies and actually having the support that I had was my advisor, who is my mentor. I think it's wonderful to have people who mentor you through the process." Another commented on the significance of peer mentoring by asserting, "Many of my peers spent time with each other making sure we understood. It really helped a lot. They talked about mentoring, but to have peer mentoring was very, very important, also." These findings corroborate earlier findings by Clewell (1987), Nettles (1990) and Tinto (1993), who cited faculty and peer interactions as influences on doctoral student persistence. The ongoing, positive interaction between faculty and students helps foster warm, nurturing learning

environments and creates what this researcher terms "a community of scholars." It is imperative to note positive interactions with peers and faculty. For some participants, unfavorable or negative interactions with faculty and advisors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles, which are discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

Financial Support

Financial support was the second most frequently mentioned factor for doctoral persistence. This finding is supported by the fact that adequate funding is necessary to pay tuition, fees and other costs associated with obtaining any form of higher education. This factor is cited in the literature by Brazziel and Brazziel (1987); Nettles(1990); Gillingham, Taussig, and Seneca (1991); Tinto (1993) ;Lenz (1997); Gregory (2001). Seven of the 8 women interviewed listed at least two forms of financial aid provided either by the institution as assistantships or grants; or by foundation scholarships or fellowships. The seven participants who received financial support were all enrolled full-time. Despite receiving award monies, all but 2 of the 7 who received financial aid still had to obtain student loans in order to pay living expenses not associated with tuition or fees. Vanessa was one and she stated, "Even though I had gotten great [financial] support, I did take out a loan partway through my program because it was a lot to do." One also received public assistance funds to help support the two children for whom she was the legal guardian. Another felt that she was forced to take second job outside of her graduate assistantship. The time demands of the second job took away from her research and study time. She added, "Even though I had to work and was able to get a little financial relief by applying for fellowships, a couple of times I found myself having to

work at the local junior college to pay my bills." Although 7 of the 8 participants began matriculating as full-time students, by the dissertation stage four of them had returned to full-time employment outside their respective universities, with ABD status, so that they could meet financial obligations. The one participant who was not enrolled full-time, Veronica, did not receive any grant , scholarship , or other award monies and relied solely on securing student loans as her only means of financial support. Yet, she completed her doctoral work in 4 years, less time than did some of the other participants who began their programs on a full-time basis. This suggests that financial support, by itself, is not a guarantee for success.

Lack of financial support was cited as an obstacle that diverted participants' time and energy away from schoolwork and required them to focus on staying afloat financially. Financial solvency seemed to be at the center of being able to be continuously enrolled in a program. Angela asserted, "If there's some pursuit of a scholarship of some sort to take the financial pressure off, that's very necessary." From the financial dilemma conveyed in participants' responses, it is apparent that institutions must examine the financial aid packages awarded to doctoral students and make sure that they are coming from multiple sources and cover not only tuition and fees, but provide stipends for living expenses. These research findings and assertions are supported by the work of Maher, Ford and Thompson (2004), which found a correlation between financial aid, full-time or part-time status, and time to degree. Brazziel and Brazziel (1987) identified inadequate funding as a hindrance, which increased time to degree for African

American doctorate-seekers. A summary of funding sources for the eight participants can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Funding Sources for Doctoral Study

Participant (Pseudonym)	Scholarship	Fellowship	Assistantship	Grant	Student Loan
Veronica					X
Angela	X		X		
Aminah	X		X		X
Madison		X	X		X
Denise		X	X		X
Vanessa			X		X
Ennad			X	X	X
Anne-Marie	X	X		X	

*X indicates the funding sources received by each participant.

Financial aid emerged as a pivotal factor in participants' abilities to maintain continuous enrollment status. Therefore, it is important to clarify the types of financial aid awarded to participants in order to have a clearer understanding of how financial aid stipulations impacted work schedules and study time, which may have played a role in each individual's responsibilities and time to degree. Only 2 of the 8 study participants

received grant funds based mainly on financial need. It is not known if others applied for grants, but were not selected as recipients.

Generally scholarships and fellowships are forms of financial aid awarded to students with special qualifications such as academic talent, scholarly potential and need. Full-time enrollment status is usually an additional criterion for most graduate funding awards. Neither scholarships nor fellowships have to be repaid. Scholarships usually do not have work or research requirements (FinAid, 2006)

Fellowships may be work-related, but are designed to minimize work obligations in order for students to spend time on graduate studies and research. (FinAid, 2006). Seven of the 8 participants were enrolled full-time. However, only three were awarded scholarships and only three were awarded fellowships. It is unknown whether or not other participants applied for, but did not receive, these forms of funding.

Graduate assistantships are work-related and require 15 to 20 hours per week of assigned teaching, research or administrative duties. Graduate assistants often benefit from their work by earning tuition and fees with a stipend (Ghali, 2004). Six of the 8 participants did work as graduate assistants. However, several stated that the stipends associated with their assistantships were not enough on which to depend solely for income. The assistantships provided some money; however, the work and time requirements were viewed by some as impediments to coursework completion and dissertation writing time. Conversely, teaching and research experiences gained from assistantships were influential in the participants' professional development. Seven of the 8 participants are currently employed as tenure-track higher education faculty

members. The only participant who did not work as a graduate or research assistant during her matriculation does not currently work in higher education.

Student loans, unlike grants, scholarships and fellowships, are borrowed money that must be repaid with interest (United States Department of Education, 2006). Loan procurement obligates borrowers to begin repayment within a stipulated period of time after completing or withdrawing from school (United States Department of Education, 2006). Six participants relied on student loans as one source of funding their doctoral educations.

Graduate assistantships and student loans are the two types of financial aid that created indebtedness for students through repayment of work time or money. Despite this fact, the majority of study participants depended on at least 1 of the 2 sources for the money. Four participants relied on both assistantships and loans. One participant, Aminah, stated, "My doctorate was financed largely by student loans. If I were not able to secure a loan, I would not have remained in the program." She added, "I had nearly $100,000 in student loans. I knew I had to get the degree."

Another factor that was cited by all eight participants as leading to success was claiming ownership in the doctoral process. The terminology refers to participants assuming proactive roles in seeking needed assistance, effectively managing time, determining research topics and redirecting research foci to match their interests. Commitment to their doctoral programs and belief that earning the advanced degree was an empowerment tool, were two personal tenets articulated by several women. Nettles (1990) and Tinto (1993) include these factors as part of their doctoral persistence

theories. The empowerment afforded by obtaining the highest level of education possible has also been a part of the African American belief system throughout the years (Anderson, 1988). Ownership of the process is reflected in navigational and decision-making skills. Development and refinement of these skills enabled participants to implement work plans. When asked how she handled challenges, Denise replied, "Coming up with an academic plan to figure out how I would do this, what I wanted to do and sticking to the plan." Similarly, Veronica advised "Go in there with a plan." Clewell (1987) found that the lack of a plan with clear goals was an obstacle. For Ennad, it was an obstacle as well. She stated, "If I had a clearer understanding of why I wanted the degree and what I wanted to take away from it, it might have been an easier experience." Aminah offered: "Be true to yourself in thinking about your research agenda. This is true for life in general. Define who you are and be who you are." Knowing about oneself and having a clear purpose was a sentiment expressed by five of the participants.

Participants alluded to knowledge of self, self-confidence and purpose as protective factors that aided with transition to their respective institutions and graduate school, in general. Anne-Marie, the oldest participant in the study, expressed that she had great difficulty adjusting to being back in school. For her, "As time went on, it became a very positive and meaningful experience, but it was difficult at first." Low self-esteem, lack of confidence and lack of direction were cited as obstacles that hindered the transition and adjustment process for some of the participants.

Age and perceptions related to it were factors that presented a challenge for several of the women. Vanessa felt that her "biggest challenge" was that she had been out of school for a really long time. Anne-Marie was also challenged with adapting to educational ideologies, instructional methods, and having classmates who were much younger than she. She overcame the obstacle by forging academic and social relationships with her classmates and professors from other programs who were just about her age.

As the youngest Ph.D. recipient in the study, Angela experienced age discrimination. She recalled an incident in which a member of her dissertation committee admitted to her that the committee didn't want her to complete the program when she did because they thought she had not "paid her dues" and was too young. Angela overcame this obstacle with resolve to become the youngest person to earn a Ph.D. from her university. Age and experience are included as influential factors in the persistence theories of Tinto (1993), Lenz (1997), and Maher, Ford and Thompson (2004). Lenz (1997) categorizes women in doctoral process who are 35 years old or older as nontraditional students. Five of the 8 participants in the study fell into this category.

Regardless of one's age, participants viewed the doctoral process as a rite of passage or paying one's dues. Another compared it to a hazing process. Five women experienced difficulty with their advisors and/ or dissertation committee members and felt as if the advisors were not compatible either because of different research interests or personality conflicts. Comments such as "He [chair] wanted my research to move in a different direction"; "He said it was impossible and didn't try to help me"; and "She had

too many things on her plate," highlight the personnel challenges that participants faced. Some resolved the conflicts by changing advisors and others leaned on social and external support and self-motivation to compensate for obstacles.

Isolation as a minority student, lack of faculty of color, and racism were all generated as hindrances and obstacles related to what Schwartz (2004) called the "double dilemma and persistent burden" of being an African American female. The dilemma presented itself in the way of racism on campuses. Several participants spoke of being accepted into warm, supportive programs and departments, but felt alienated and isolated as a minority student.

Madison shared, "My department was very supportive of multicultural issues and diversity, but the university was not. It was fine operating in our department, but the university as a whole was not supportive." Angela spoke of being one of only a few African Americans on her Southwest campus and felt that racism along with age discrimination was her biggest challenge. Ennad shared that she was the only student of color in her cohort of 12 students. Conveying similar thoughts and experiences concerning isolation as a minority student, Denise stated, "Graduate school is really tough and when you're in a program or you're one of a very small number, feeling a part of that community is not going to happen and I think there is a lack of understanding about how important that community is. It's like, this is the culture. Acculturate to it and make it work. I think that that's a reasonable expectation in some regards, but if you're one of a very few students of color, I don't feel like that is a reasonable expectation.

There needs to be a critical mass of students of color and faculty of color at all these institutions that can provide pathways for students of all backgrounds to make it."

The expectation for a few faculty members or students of color to serve as representatives of the African American women's perspective was called "an unfair burden," again harkening back to the terms "double dilemma" and "persistent burden" used by Schwartz (2004). Furthermore, spirituality was a vehicle to lessen the "burden."

One participant stated, "Spiritual support is important for some students." Spirituality was indeed cited as one of the ways that participants dealt with challenges and overcame obstacles that confronted them. "It wasn't prayer that got me through. It was grace and mercy" (Aminah). "I had to do what I had to do to get it [doctorate] and I had to trust God" (Angela). "I think I did a lot of this on faith" (Vanessa) "I felt like someone who was always there for me and who understood what I was going through and provided the help was God" (Madison). "I prayed all the time" (Anne-Marie).

There was a combination of factors at play that led to successful doctoral degree completion for the eight participants in this study. The factors are not generalizable to others; however, they may provide guidance and points of reference for current and future African American women doctoral students.

A theoretical model (Figure 1) has been developed by the researcher to graphically represent factors influencing successful doctoral degree attainment in education by African American women. The model reflects the factors that were common to participants in this study and consistent with findings of past research.

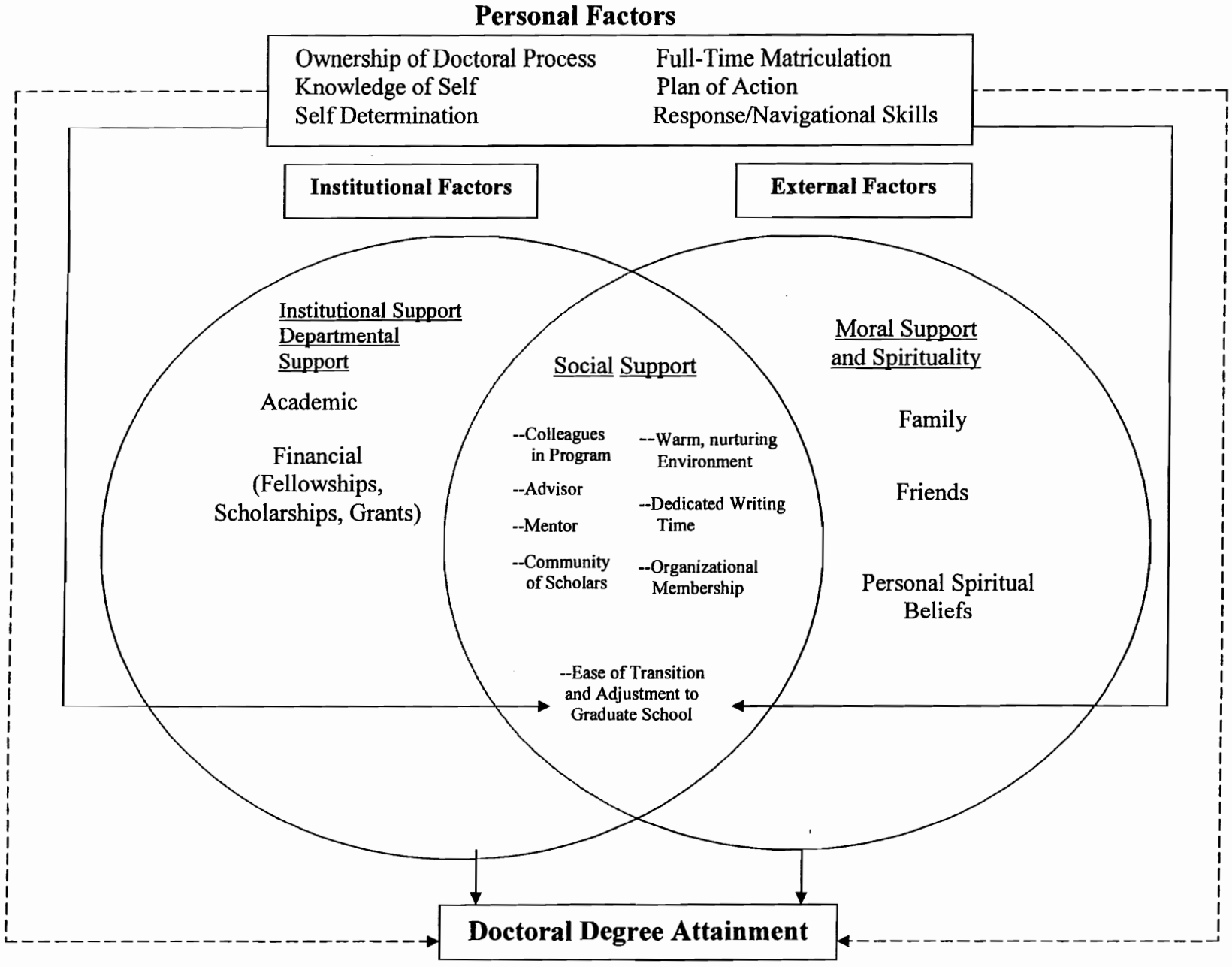


Figure 1. *Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women*

Figure 1 illustrates the factors that have led to successful attainment of doctoral degrees in Education by African American women. Development of the model is based on a limited number of participants and may not be generalizable to other populations.

Personal factors refer to individual attributes and decisions made by participants. Ownership of the doctoral degree process, knowledge about oneself, acquisition of response and navigational skills, self-determination, choosing to matriculate on a full-time basis, and developing a plan of action for matriculation are factors that develop prior to or early in the doctoral degree process. These factors are present throughout matriculation, influence ease of transition and adjustment to graduate school and ultimately contribute to successful program completion.

Institutional factors are comprised of factors that are present on the university and departmental levels. Although an academic department within a university may offer various forms of support, the level and type of support may differ across departments on the university-wide level. Academic support includes assignment of an advisor with whom there is a positive two-way working relationship, availability of student groups, and programmatic benchmarks at which students' progress is monitored and feedback is provided.

Financial support from within the department and university in the forms of fellowships, assistantships, scholarships and grants covering tuition, fees and living expenses are essential for allowing students to matriculate on a full-time basis. Removal of the responsibility of having to work outside of the university while in school allows

students to focus on coursework and writing, decreasing the hindrances of lack of time and money. However, family situations or obligations may prevent this.

Social support that is both internal and external to the institution is a factor that is critical for successful doctoral attainment. Social support comes from a variety of sources including colleagues in doctoral programs, a supportive advisor, a mentor, one's membership in a community of scholars. Additionally, social support is generated by members of the university community and family and friends as they facilitate dedicated writing time and ease of transition to graduate school for students by providing warm, nurturing environments. Membership in organizations also provides outlets for socialization and personal development.

External factors include moral support and spirituality offered by friends, family and the student's own personal spiritual beliefs. One's personal spiritual beliefs provide comfort, encouragement and strength. The moral support provided by family members, and friends often intersects with the social support provided by colleagues, advisors, and mentors whose friendship and support may transcend the boundaries of the institutional setting.

Conclusions

This qualitative research study has investigated factors that led or hindered successful doctoral degree attainment in education by African American women. The eight participants in this study collectively attributed more than 15 factors to helping them complete a doctoral program. Likewise, approximately 15 factors were counted as hindrances or obstacles. Although the number of hindrances and obstacles were nearly

equal to success factors, participants overcame these barriers and successfully earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree. This is perhaps due to personal factors or a combination of factors.

Successful doctoral degree attainment cannot be guaranteed for anyone. There are extraneous variables and factors that influence every individual's circumstance. However, there are factors that have been revealed in this study as positive influences on doctoral program completion. These factors have been thematically categorized and include personal factors such as effective time management, commitment to doctoral program, effective navigational and decision-making skills, viewing the doctorate as a source of empowerment and having knowledge of self, time dedicated to dissertation writing. Institutional factors include offering financial support, a positive mentor/advisor, a warm, nurturing environment, academic support, a community of scholars, and involvement in activities. External to the institution and the individual, strong family support, social support and spirituality are also variables for success. Particular attention should be given to sources of social and financial support as the factors that were most often cited as key elements of successful program completion.

Conversely, attainment of a doctoral degree is hindered by personal factors such as negative thinking, low self-confidence, health challenges and length of time between undergraduate and graduate studies. On an institutional level, isolation of minority students, racism, few faculty of color, lack of financial support and poor relationships with advisors are obstacles faced. External challenges include the lack of social support at critical times and having to "pay one's dues" as a rite of passage.

Recommendations for doctoral students, advisors and university administrators have implications for changes in higher education policy and practice. African American women doctoral students must be knowledgeable about themselves and about their institutions. In addition to this, they must possess a clear understanding of their purpose for seeking a doctorate. This knowledge should help guide decision-making and shape a plan of action for successful doctoral program completion. Doctoral advisors and university administrators must commit to fostering success for African American doctoral students by offering academic, financial and social support, as well as establishing a diverse learning environment with a critical mass of faculty and students of color.

Universities and academic departments within institutions should hold informational sessions, organize campus tours and arrange interviews with prospective doctoral students so that they may have opportunities to visit campuses and interact with faculty, staff and students before making enrollment decisions. Extended pre-enrollment campus visits would allow prospective students to observe student life and campus climates. Possession of this knowledge prior to matriculation may prove to be helpful in determining if an institution and/or particular doctoral program is a "good fit" for an individual, thereby facilitating adjustment and fostering success.

Formal orientation programs that help doctoral students become acclimated to campus environments, create social networks, and become aware of services and programs offering academic, social and financial support should also be instituted by doctoral program administrators and faculty.

To successfully attain doctoral degrees in Education, African American women must possess an intrinsic desire to commit to and complete the arduous educational endeavor of doctoral pursuit. In addition to this, they must individually assume a proactive role in decision making. This includes researching prospective doctoral institutions as well as identifying and accessing human, academic and financial resources to assist them throughout the process.

The following recommendations are a compilation of responses that were given by participants in this study. Although individuals' personal experiences are not necessarily generalizable, there are aspects of transferability, which enable others to examine the recommendations and to adhere to them as applicable situations warrant (see Tables 5 and 6).

Limitations

The purview of this study was limited to African American women in the academic area of education. All participants were Ph.D. recipients from universities located in the southeastern, northeastern and mid-western geographic regions of the United States. The majority of the institutions attended by participants were state-affiliated schools. There were no participants who received a doctoral degree from a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Participation was limited to participants who had access to the Polycom videoconferencing system. No doctoral

Table 5

Recommendations for Current and Aspiring African American Women Doctoral Students

Recommendations for Social Success	Recommendations for Academic Success	Recommendations for Financial Success	Recommendations for Personal Success
■ Become involved in some type of support group (classmates, other doctoral students). ■ Become involved in at least one campus or community-based activity. ■ Create a network wherever you go. ■ Surround yourself with people who share your passion and who can keep you going.	■ Really look into the institution that you are attending or plan to attend. ■ Make sure that you feel the institution is a good fit for you. ■ Seek the help you need. ■ Choose your dissertation topic before reaching the writing stage. ■ Select your dissertation advisor and committee members carefully. ■ Establish good relationships with your advisor and committee members. ■ Take advantage of opportunities to read and hear others present their research.	■ Make sure you have access to funds. ■ Actively seek financial support by appying for scholarships and fellowships.	■ Know yourself. ■ Identify your strengths and weaknesses. ■ Be as well rounded as you can, not totally negating or denying who you were when starting the doctoral program. ■ Consider the sacrifices that you are willing to make to earn a doctorate. ■ Have some intrinsic motivation. You can't do the doctorate for others. You have to do it for yourself.

Table 6

Recommendations for Doctoral Advisors and University Administrators for Helping African American Women's Successful Doctoral Degree Attainment

Recommendations for Doctoral Advisors	Recommendations for University Administrators
■ Provide academic, social and emotional support for doctoral students.	■ Engage in discussion about successful minority student degree completion.
■ Be willing to stand up for your advisees.	■ Commit to institutional change.
■ Provide opportunities for doctoral students to collaborate with each other and faculty members for publications and presentations.	■ Work to achieve a critical mass of students and faculty of color.
■ Help identify sources of financial aid for students.	■ Provide support for doctoral students, as an institution and one-on-one.
	■ Provide an environment where African American women feel they can be successful and a part of a community.
	■ Provide mentors.

advisors or program administrators were interviewed. The purposeful sampling of eight participants limits generalizability. However, others may consider factors and recommendations when examining similar related topics.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings suggest that successful doctoral degree attainment may be largely influenced by multiple personal, institutional and external factors which are relevant to every individual. Additional studies of successful doctoral degree completers which specifically focus on individuals' adjustment to institutions would likely provide insight on the development of social networking, navigational and decision-making skills that aid in persistence and degree attainment. Investigation of factors influencing doctoral students' choices of universities would likely provide information about factors related to doctoral degree completion such as financial aid, program requirements, and average time to degree for programs. Such information would be helpful to institutional program planners who seek to foster doctoral student persistence and completion.

It would also be prudent to further examine the presence or lack of various forms of institutional social support provided to doctoral students in order to offer suggestions to guide universities and academic departments in establishing much needed support outlets for minority doctoral students.

Interviewing faculty members, doctoral advisors and program administrators would offer multiple viewpoints related to institutional factors and the doctoral process.

The role of mentors in the doctoral process emerged as a theme throughout this study. It is important to further investigate mentor-mentee relationships and their impact on student satisfaction and program completion.

Financial support has emerged as a critical factor for successful program completion. Research on the frequency and type of financial support awarded to African American doctoral students in various academic disciplines may yield results that have implications for financial aid and award policy.

Further research to identify specific types and extent of social support received would be advantageous to doctoral students seeking to create support networks, and for advisors and university officials seeking to create warm, nurturing environments in which doctoral students could successfully thrive.

Factors contributing to successful doctoral degree completion for African American men and women in other academic disciplines need to be determined, particularly in disciplines where the underrepresentation of African Americans and other minorities is more pronounced. Furthermore, future investigations on factors leading to successful doctoral degree attainment should be expanded to include doctoral program completers at HBCUs. A related study of the relationship between positive educational experiences for minority doctoral degree recipients and their choices to pursue careers in the academy could possibly shed light on factors surrounding the lack of faculty of color.

Summary

Chapter 5 has included a discussion and interpretation of findings for the two research questions for this study:

1. What experiences and/or factors contributed to successful doctoral program completion of African American Women in the field of Education?

2. What events and/or factors were viewed as hindrances or obstacles to doctoral program completion for African American women in the field of Education?

Emergent themes included social, academic and financial support. Categories for success factors were personal, institutional and external factors. Categories for Hindrances/Obstacles were personal, academic/institutional and external factors. Factors such as ownership in the doctoral process, positive relationships with advisors, knowledge of self, spirituality, isolation as a minority student, and age were some of the factors included in the discussion.

The *Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women* was generated from limited responses provided by participants. The limited generalizability of results yielded from purposeful sampling of eight participants was acknowledged.

Limitations were the absence of participants who received doctorates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, those who received doctorates from institutions in the western geographic region of the United States, and those without access to the H.323 Polycom Videoconferencing System that was the mode of communication for interviews.

Recommendations for current and prospective doctoral students, doctoral advisors and program administrators were offered as insight for higher education policymakers,

and commitment to meeting the academic, social and financial needs of African American students was encouraged.

Future research recommendations included focus on individuals' adjustments to institutions as related to social, navigational and decision-making skills. Closer examination of the forms of institutional support for doctoral students was identified as an area for future study. Likewise, an expanded study of factors for successful doctoral attainment from the viewpoints of program faculty, advisors and administrators would offer a more global perspective.

Investigating the role of mentor-mentee relationships and their impact on student satisfaction and program completion was recommended as well as research on the frequency and scope of financial and support offered to African American doctoral students. Determining factors that contribute to successful doctoral degree completion for African American men and women and other minorities in various academic disciplines was suggested as a strategy for addressing underrepresentation in higher education. The need for studies on doctoral completion at HBCUs was stated. Lastly, the relationship between positive educational experiences for minority doctoral recipients and academic career choices was identified as a step in the direction of addressing factors surrounding the lack of faculty of color.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

African American Registry. (n.d.). *African American firsts*. Retrieved December 14, 2004, from http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history.

American Council on Education. (2003, October 8). *Minority college enrollment surges over the past two decades; Students of color still lag behind whites in college participation.* Retrieved October 10, 2003, from www.acenet.edu/news/press_release/2003/10october/minority_report.cfm.

Andersen, D. G. (1983). Differentiation of the Ed.D. and Ph.D. Education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 34*, 55-58.

Anderson, J. D. (1988). The education of blacks in the south, 1869-1935. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Astin, A. W. (1982). *Minorities in higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25(7)*, 297-308.

Baez, B. (2002, November). Degree of distinction: The Ed.D. or the Ph.D. in education. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Sacramento, CA.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Research for education* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bowen, W. G., & Rudestine, N. L. (1992). *In pursuit of the Ph.D.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, (1954)

Bryant, M. (2004). *The portable dissertation advisor.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Buccino, A. (1991). *On the doctorate in education: Distinguishing Ph.D. and Ed.D.* Retrieved June 24, 2005 from www.unl.edu/secd/tcgrad1/degreediff.html.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2000). *The 2000 Carnegie* classification: category definitions. Retrieved February 28, 2005, from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/Classification/CIHE2000/defNotes/ Definitions.htm.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2001, October). *Overview of doctoral education studies and reports: 1990-Present.* Retrieved December 12, 2004 from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CID/doctoral_ed_summary.pdf.

Clark Atlanta University. (2005). *About Clark Atlanta University.* Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://www.cau.edu.

Clewell, B. C. (1987). *Retention of black and hispanic doctoral students.* (GRE Board Report No.83-4R). Princeton, NJ: Graduate Record Examination Board.

Collins, A. C. (2001). Black women in the academy: A historical overview. In R. O. Mabokela, & A. L. Green (Eds.), *Sisters of the academy: Emergent black women scholars in higher education* (pp.29-42). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Collins, C. M., & Cohen, D. (Eds.). (1993). *The African Americans.* New York: Penguin.

Council of Graduate Schools. (n.d.). *Graduate enrollment and degrees 1986 to 2002.* Retrieved September 29, 2004, from http://www.cgsnet.org/pdf/GED%202002.pdf.

Council of Graduate Schools. (2004) *The Ph.D. completion project.* Retrieved November 17, 2004 from http://www.phdcompletion.org/information/index.asp.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation. (n.d.). *Important questions about 'diploma mills' and 'accreditation mills.'* Fact sheet #6. Retrieved April 11, 2005 from http://www.www.chea.org.

Cross, T., & Slater, R. B. (2000). The alarming decline in the academic performance of African American men. *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 27, 88.

Durkheim, E. (1956). *Education and sociology* (S. Fox, Trans.). New York: Free Press.

Fields, C. D. (2000). Can HBCUs compete for black faculty? *Black Issues in Education.* Retrieved September 28, 2004, from http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 51(4),* 327-358.

Gall, M .D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction* (6th ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Ghali, M. (2004, April). The use of work study funds to create research scholarships. *Council of Graduate Schools Communicator, 37(3),* 1-2, 5.

Gill. W. E,. & Showell, D. R. (1991). *The Cinderella concept of the black female in higher education.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331 379).

Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum.

Gillingham, L., Seneca, J. J., & Taussig, M. K. (1991). The determinants of progress to the doctoral degree. *Research in Higher Education, 32(4),* 449-468.

Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Green., A., & Scott, L. V.(Eds.). (2003). *Journey to the Ph.D.: How to navigate the process as African Americans*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Gregory, S. T. (2001). Black women in the academy: Challenges and opportunities. *The Journal of Negro Education, 70(3),* 124-138.

Hamilton, K. (2001). Doctoral dilemma. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 8(11),* 34-37.

Hinton-Johnson, K. (2003). Dreams hanging in the air like smoke: A personal reflection of factors influencing enrollment and persistence in higher education. In A. L Green, & L. V. Scott (Eds.), Journey to the Ph.D.: *How to navigate the process as African Americans* (pp.30-46). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Holmes Partnership 2002. (n.d.) *Holmes scholars: About the program*. Retrieved May 2, 2005 from http://www.holmes-cholars.org/about_program.html.

Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2004). Meeting the needs of African American women. *New Directions for Student Services, 104*, i.

Jackson, C. L. (2001). *African American education: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Jackson, J. F. L. (Ed.). (2003). Engaging, retaining and advancing African Americans in student affairs administration: An analysis of employment status [Special issue]. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal, 6(1)* 13-19.

Jeffries, R. B., & Generett, G. G. (2003). Black women as qualitative researchers: Performing acts of understanding and survival-An introduction. In R .B. Jeffries, & G. G. Generett (Eds.), *Black women in the field: Experiences understanding ourselves through qualitative research* (pp.2-4). Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2000) *Educational research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Jones, L. (Ed.). (2001). *Retaining African Americans in higher education: Challenging paradigms for retaining students, faculty and administrators.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Kerlins, R. (1997). *Breaking the silence: Toward a theory of women's doctoral persistence.* Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University in the University of Toronto, Ontario Canada. Retrieved September 13, 2005 fromhttp:kerlins.net/bobbi/research/diss.html.

Krause, L. (2001, February 7). Charles Houston: The man who killed Jim Crow. *National Geographic News.* Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://newsnationalgeographic.com/news/2001/0206_charleshouston.html.

LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.

Lenz, K. S. (1997). Nontraditional-aged women and the doctoral dissertation: A case study approach. *New Directions in Higher Education*, 99, 65-74.

Lewis, S. K. (2000). Sistermentors: Who we are and why we exist. Retrieved January 31, 2005 from http://www.sistermentors.org.

Library of Congress. (2004). *With an even hand*: *Brown v. Board at fifty*. Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Lovitts, B. E. (1996). *Leaving the ivory tower: A sociological analysis of the causes of departure from doctoral study*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1996). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 57* (12A), 5110.

Maher, M. A., Ford, M. E., & Thompson, C. M. (2004). Degree progress of women doctoral students: Factors that constrain, facilitate, and differentiate. *The Review of Higher Education, 27(3),* 385-408.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative interviewing: Asking, listening and interpreting. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 225-240). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Melendez, S. (2004). From humble beginnings comes great achievement. In *Reflections on 20 years of minorities in Higher Education and the American Council of Education,* Annual Status Report. Washington, DC: American Council of Education.

McMillan, J. H. (2000). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer* (3rd ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (4th ed.). New York: Longman.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mickens, R. (1978). First black Ph.D. *Black Collegian, 4*, 32.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook*: *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Millett, C., & Nettles, M. (2000, December). *Race, sex and field differences in doctoral student experiences: Research productivity and faculty mentoring.* Paper presented at the Council of Graduate Schools Annual Meeting , New Orleans, LA

Myers, L. W. (2002). *A broken silence: Voices of African American women in the academy.* Westport, CT: Greenwood.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Legal Defense Fund. (n.d.). Retrieved September 24, 2005 from http:www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/pubs/The_Winding_Road_to_Brown.pdf.

National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Classifications of instructional programs.* Retrieved March 7, 2005, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/ciplist.asp?CIP2=13.

National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Enrollment.* Retrieved September 27, 2004, from http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/sisplay.

National Opinion Research Center. (2002). *Survey of earned doctorates. Doctoral recipients from United States universities summary report.* Retrieved October 20, 2004 from http://www.norc.uchicgo.edu/issues/sed_2002.pdf.

National Park Service. (n.d.). *Brown v. Board of Education national historic site related cases*. Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://www.nps/gov.brvb/pages/related.htm.

National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resource Studies. (1998). *Summary of workshop on graduate student attrition*, NSF 99-314, Project Officer Alan I. Rapoport, Arlington, VA.

Nerad, M., & Cerny, J. (1999). Widening the circle: Another look at women graduate students. *CGS Communicator, 32(6)*, 1-7.

Nettles, M. T. (1990). Success in doctoral programs: Experiences of minority and white students. *American Journal of Education*, 494-522.

Nettles, M. T., Perna, L. W., & Freeman, K. E. (1999). *Two decades of progress: African Americans moving forward in higher education.* Fairfax, VA: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute of the United Negro College Fund

Nichols, J. C., & Tanksley, C. B. (2004). Revelations of African American women with terminal degrees: Overcoming obstacles to success. *The Negro Educational Review, 55(4)*, 175-185.

Nyquist, J. D., & Woodford, B. J. (2000). *Re-envisioning the Ph.D.: What concerns do we have?* Center for Instructional Development and Research and the University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Percentage of doctoral degrees awarded to blacks has reached the highest level ever recorded. (2004). *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.* Retrieved October 19, 2004 from http://www.jbhe.com/new_views/42_PhDs_and_blacks.html.

Oberlin College. (n.d.). *Oberlin's distinguished 172 year history.* Retrieved September 25, 2005 from http://www.oberlin.edu.

Rudolph, F. (!990). *The American college and university: A history.* Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Schwartz, R. A. (2003). Ain't I a woman, too?: Tracing the experiences of African American women in graduate school. *Journal of Negro Education.* Retrieved September 22, 2005 from http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3626/is_200307/ai_n9249605.

Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative: Methods for analyzing talk, text and Interaction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Simpson, M. T. (2003). *Exploring the academic and social transition experiences of ethnic minority graduate students.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

Sisters of the Academy. (2005). *About the organization.* Retrived on January 31, 2005 from http://www.sistersoftheacademy.org/about.

Smallwood, S. (2004). Doctor dropout. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50(19),* A10

Smith, J. C. (Ed.) (2003). *Black Firsts: 2,000 years of extraordinary achievement.* Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press.

Solomon, B. M. (1985). *In the company of educated women: A history of women and higher education in America.* New Haven, NY: Yale University Press.

Stake, R .E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Symon, G., & Cassell, C. (Eds.). (1998). *Qualitative methods and analysis in organizational research: A practical guide.* London: Sage.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tobin, M. (1981). *The black female Ph.D.: Education and career development.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Touchton, J. G., & Davis, L. (1991). *American Council on Education: Fact book on women in higher education.* New York: Macmillan.

UMI ProQuest. (n.d.). *Dissertation lore.* Retrieved December 12, 2004 from www.umi.com/umi/dissertations/lore.html.

United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Status and trends in the education of blacks,* (NCES 2003-034). Washington, D.C.

United States Federal Government. (n.d.). *Civil Rights Act of 1964.* Retrieved December 15, 2004 from http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civil.

United States Office of Management and Budget, United States Census Bureau. (2001). *The black population: Census 2000 brief.* Retrieved February 15, 2005 from http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-5.pdf.

United States Office of Management and Budget, United States Census Bureau. (2001) *The hispanic population: Census 2000 brief.* Retrieved October 18, 2005 from http:www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf.

Watkins, R. M., Herrin, M. & McDonald, L. R. (1998). The juxtaposition of career and family: A dilemma for professional women. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal.* Retrieved February 27, 2005 fromhttp://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/winter98/awlv2_watkins5.html.

Whisenton, J. T. (1989). Increasing the pool of black Ph.D.s in blacks in higher education. In J. C. Elam (Ed.), *Overcoming the odds* (pp.105-113). Lanham, MD: University Press.

Willie, C. V.,Grady, M. K., & Hope, R. O. (1991). *African Americans and the doctoral experience: Implications for policy.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Wolf-Wendel, L. E. (1998). Models of excellence: the baccalaureate origins of successful European American women, African American women and Latinas. *Journal of Higher Education, 69(2)*, 141-170.

Woods, R. L. (2001). Invisible women: The experiences of black female doctoral students at the University of Michigan. In R. Mabokela & A. L. Green (Eds.), *Sisters of the academy: Emergent black women in higher education* (pp.105-115). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

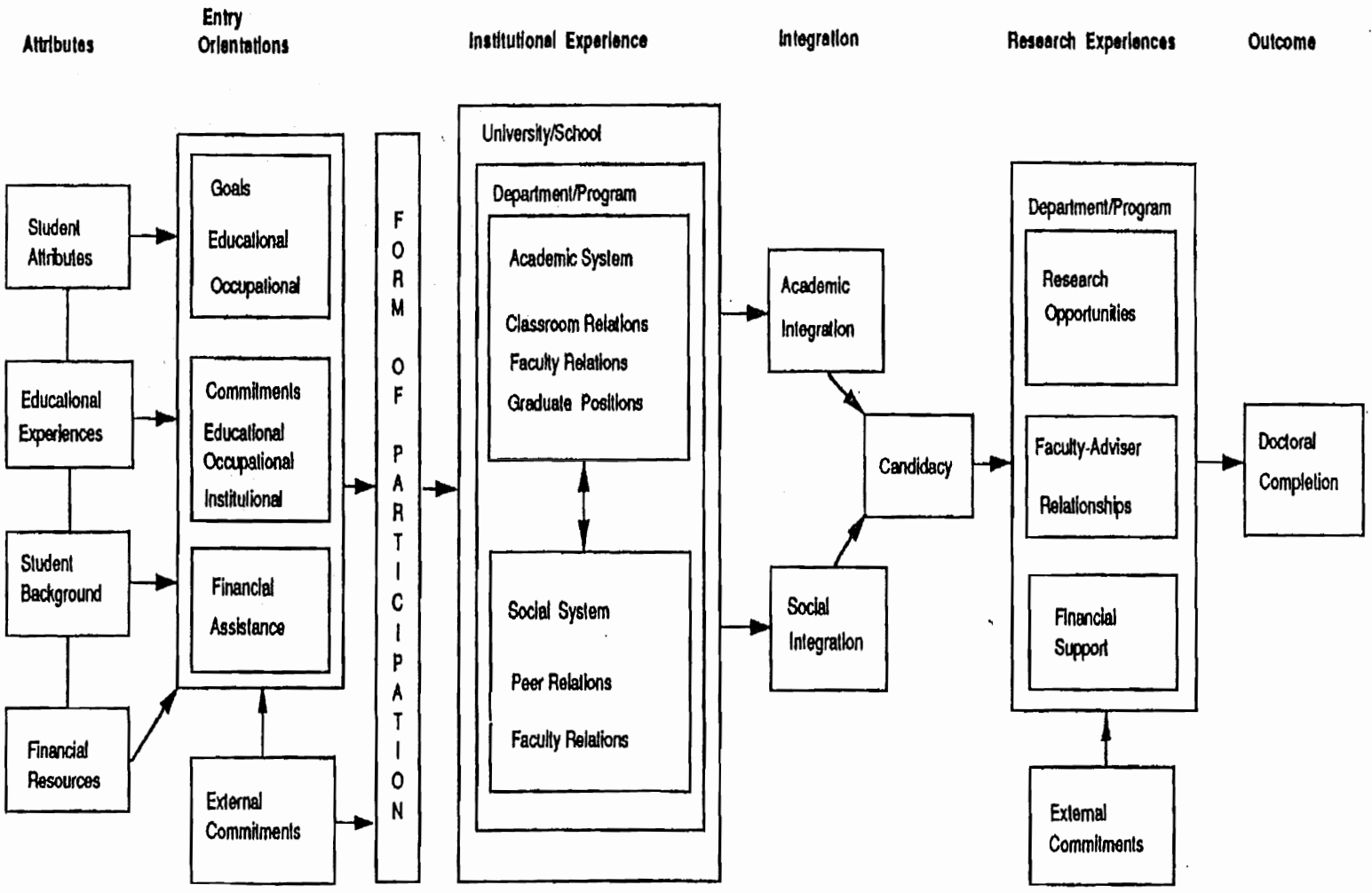
Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The mis-education of the negro.* Chicago: African American Images.

Wormser, R. (2002). *The rise and fall of Jim Crow*. Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://www.pbs.org/net/jmcrow/stories_events_gaines.html.

Yates, D. Y., & Mills, T. L. (2004). From elation to uncertainty: Preparing for the aftermath of the Grutter v. Bollinger decision. *Perspectives*. Retrieved September 23, 2005 from http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/tlmills/pub.../Mills.

APPENDIX A

TINTO'S THEORETICAL MODEL OF DOCTORAL PERSISTENCE


Attributes
Entry Orientations
Institutional Experience
Integration
Research Experiences
Outcome
Student Attributes
Educational Experiences
Student Background
Financial Resources
Goals
Educational
Occupational
Commitments
Educational
Occupational
Institutional
Financial Assistance
External Commitments
FORM OF PARTICIPATION
University/School
Department/Program
Academic System
Classroom Relations
Faculty Relations
Graduate Positions
Social System
Peer Relations
Faculty Relations
Academic Integration
Social Integration
Candidacy
Department/Program
Research Opportunities
Faculty-Adviser Relationships
Financial Support
External Commitments
Doctoral Completion

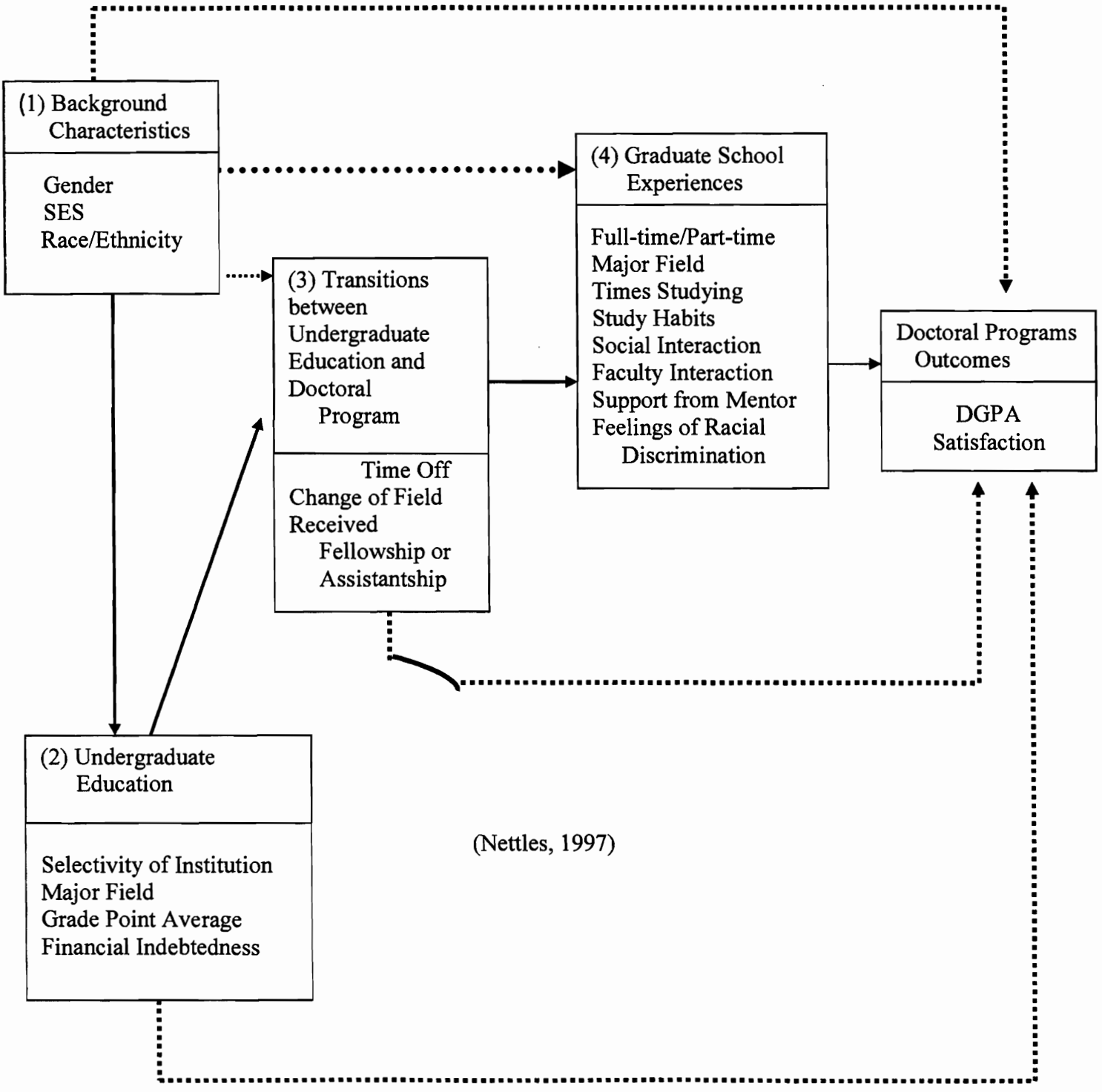
APPENDIX B

NETTLES' CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

APPENDIX B

NETTLES' CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Factors Related To Minority Students' Doctoral Experiences And Outcomes



(Nettles, 1997)

APPENDIX C

PEER DEBRIEFER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

APPENDIX C

PEER DEBRIEFER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I, _____, have served as a peer debriefer for *Factors Influencing Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women* by Antoinette M. Rogers. In this role, I have worked with the researcher throughout the study in capacities such as reviewing transcripts and assisting in emerging issues.

Signed:_____

Date:_____

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER FOR INFORMED CONSENT

AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER FOR INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Dr. _____:

My name is Antoinette M. Rogers and I am a doctoral candidate in the Instructional Leadership Track of the Ph.D. in Education program at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am soliciting your help for my dissertation study. My study is entitled

Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women

Dr. Diane Johnson Simon is my dissertation director.

My purpose is to gather and share the success stories of African American women who have earned either the Ed.D. or Ph.D. degree in a field of education. At present, there are very few studies related to African American women and the doctoral process.

I will collect data by way of a questionnaire and videoconference interviews. Participants selected for interviews will be contacted via telephone or e-mail. During interviews, participants will reflect on their doctoral experiences and identify factors that influenced them during their time in graduate school.

Enclosed is an informed consent that will provide more details about my study and what is required of you should you choose to participate. If you are interested in participating, please read and sign the enclosed informed consent form and return it to me

in the self-addressed, stamped envelope that has been provided. I am asking that the form be returned by_____.

Please direct any questions or comments to:

Antoinette M. Rogers
VCU School of Education
Office of Doctoral Studies
P.O. Box 842020
Richmond, VA 23284-2020

Thank you for your time and valuable feedback.

Sincerely,

Antoinette M. Rogers, Doctoral Candidate
Instructional Leadership and Higher Education
Virginia Commonwealth University

APPENDIX E

INITIAL INQUIRY LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS

APPENDIX E

INITIAL INQUIRY LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS

Dear _____:

My name is Antoinette M. Rogers. I am a doctoral candidate in Instructional Leadership with a cognate in Higher Education at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

I am conducting a dissertation study entitled:

Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women

My goal is to conduct interviews with African American woman doctoral recipients in order to find out what factors and experiences influenced their graduate program completion. This information will be helpful to doctoral program faculty, administrators and aspiring doctoral students.

I am aware that your organization's membership is comprised of African American woman doctoral students and recipients. I am soliciting your help in identifying members of your group who are African American women who have been awarded either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in the field of education within the past ten (10) years (1995-2005). I would like to contact them to ascertain their interest in participating in my study.

I would kindly appreciate the phone number, mailing and/or e-mail address for prospective participants. You may send them to me using the contact information below. I will contact them directly. However, feel free to provide my name and contact information to anyone who has questions or may qualify for participation.

Your help is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Antoinette M. Rogers

P.O. Box 842020
Richmond, Virginia 23284-2020

APPENDIX F

COVER LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

AND INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX F

COVER LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Dr. _____

Thank you for returning the informed consent form for my dissertation study entitled *Factors Leading to Successful Attainment of Doctoral Degrees in Education by African American Women.*

I am pleased to learn of your interest in participating in the study. Enclosed is a questionnaire that I would like you to fill out and return to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope that I have provided for you. The questionnaire will give me more detailed information about you as a prospective study participant. I will select interviewees based on the information you provide. The questionnaire will take approximately ten (10) minutes to complete. I am asking that the questionnaire be completed and returned by_____

Thank you for sharing this valuable information.

Sincerely,

Antoinette M. Rogers

Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Education
Office of Doctoral Studies

INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please use the enclosed envelope to return to: ID#_____(assigned by researcher)

Antoinette M. Rogers
VCU SOE Office of Doctoral Studies
P.O. Box 842020
Richmond, VA 23284-2020

****Please use the back or additional paper if needed.*

Name_____

Gender _____ Race_____

e-mail address_____ phone number(s)_____

_____

Hometown (originally from):_____

Doctoral degree _____ Ed.D. _____ Ph.D.

Major field/degree area_____

If you have a specialization, please list_____

University from which you received your doctorate and location

_____

Year in which doctorate was awarded_____

Undergraduate degree-granting institution and location

_____

Year in which bachelor's degree was awarded_____

Master's degree-granting institution and location

_____

Year in which master's degree was awarded_____
How old were you when you started your doctoral program?_____

How old were you when you graduated from the doctoral program?_____

Did you pursue your studies full-time?_____part-time?_____

Did you work while you were in school? _____yes _____no

* If yes, please explain_____

_____

_____

Did you receive some type of financial aid? _____yes _____no

* If yes, check all that apply :_____ scholarship _____fellowship

_____ student loan _____grant _____assistantship _____other

comments:_____

_____

What was your marital status during your time in the doctoral program?

_____single (never married) _____married _____ separated

_____ divorced _____widowed

Did your marital status change during your schooling? _____ yes _____ no

Did you have children when you pursued your doctoral studies? _____ yes _____no

*If yes, how many? _____

Comments_____

_____

Current job title:_____

Place of employment (agency or institution and location)

_____

Do you have access to the Polycom FX Videoconferencing System or another compatible videoconferencing system (H.323 two-way videoconferencing) that can be used for interviews?

_____Yes _____No _____Not sure

What is your preferred method of contact to schedule an interview?

_____ telephone _____ e-mail

The best time(s) to contact me is/are:_____

Thank you for your help!

Antoinette M. Rogers

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT SELECTION MATRIX

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT SELECTION MATRIX

Quest. ID #	Access to V-C/ Polycom	City ,State Region	Doctoral Degree/ Institution	Year of Comp	Age	Comments

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT BRIEFING CHECKLIST

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT BRIEFING CHECKLIST

_____Inform participant of confidentiality of the interview.

_____Ask if there is a preferred pseudonym by which the participant wishes to be known

_____Warn participant of possible discomfort in disclosing information

_____ Invite participant to share her own ideas and thoughts at any time

_____Remind participants that each interview will be mechanically recorded using an audiocassette recorder and the Polycom Videoconferencing System

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Guiding Questions

1. What motivated you to pursue a doctorate?
2. Discuss your adjustment to graduate school.
3. Tell me about support you received while pursuing your doctorate.
4. How did you handle challenges?
5. What success strategies would you suggest for others pursuing the doctorate?
6. Are there other things related to the doctoral process you would like to share?

APPENDIX J

FACESHEET

APPENDIX J

FACESHEET

Name/Pseudonym:

Date of Interview:

Time:

Location:

Description of setting:

Additional Comments/Notes:

APPENDIX K

MEMBER CHECK ELECTRONIC COVER LETTER

APPENDIX K

MEMBER CHECK ELECTRONIC COVER LETTER

Dear Dr. _____,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me about your doctoral experience. Attached, as a Microsoft Word document, is the transcript from our conversation which took place on _____.

Please review it to make sure that your comments and responses are presented accurately. If you would like to make changes to ensure correctness, please contact me within the next two weeks, no later than *_____.

*NOTE: A specific response deadline will be provided for each participant based her interview date

Sincerely,

Antoinette M. Rogers

APPENDIX L

TRANSCRIBER'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

APPENDIX L

TRANSCRIBER'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Factors Leading to Successful Attainment
of Doctoral Degrees in Education by
African American Women

I understand that I will be listening to audiotapes of confidential interviews. Based on these audiotapes, I will be preparing transcriptions. The information in these transcripts has been divulged by research participants in this study who agreed in good faith that their information would remain confidential.

I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I agree not to share any information in these transcripts with anyone except the researcher, Antoinette M. Rogers. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Transcriber_____

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEWER SCRIPT

Start of Interview

Thank you for taking time to speak with me about your experiences during your doctoral pursuit.

As you may remember, this interview is the first of two that I will conduct. It should last approximately one hour. Although I will be asking you questions, I'd like the interview to take on the format of a conversation. You are encouraged to reflect on your time in graduate school and share openly. Feel free to interject any information that you think is important for revealing factors that lead to successful doctoral attainment in education by African American women. The information collected will be reported as findings for my dissertation study. All information will be used for this purpose only.

I will record our conversation using an audiocassette recorder and the Polycom videoconferencing system. I will also take written notes that will help me report your comments accurately and verbatim.

Now I will review the informed consent information with you and then we will get started.

INFORMED CONSENT INFORMATION WILL BE REVIEWED.
INTERVIEW USING PROTOCOL

End of interview

Thank you for your time. Our discussion has been helpful. If you have additional comments or thoughts you'd like to share, feel free to contact me via telephone or e-mail. I will be in touch with you shortly to review the transcript from this interview to ensure accuracy.

VITA

Antoinette Michelle Rogers was born September 4, 1969 in Richmond, Virginia. She is an American citizen and the daughter of Anthony W. Rogers and the late Effie Eure Rogers. After graduating from Richmond's Thomas Jefferson High School in 1987, she matriculated at Hampton University and received the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education in 1991.

Antoinette worked for the Richmond City Public Schools for ten years, first as a classroom teacher, then as a school library media specialist. In 1999, she received the Master of Education degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. In 2000, she was chosen to serve as Library Media Specialist-in-Residence in the Division of Teacher Education, School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. During this appointment, she began doctoral studies and worked as a graduate assistant and instructor at Virginia Commonwealth University and as an adjunct instructor at Virginia Union University. Participation in the Holmes Scholars, and the Preparing Future Faculty programs greatly influenced Dr. Rogers' decision to pursue a career in higher education.

Antoinette was the recipient of the Stephen J. Wright, Shumacher and Virginia Commonwealth University Graduate School Fellowships. She was also a dissertation fellow at Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio, during the summer of 2005. Her current research interests are diversity issues in K-12 and postsecondary settings, teacher quality, student affairs and mentoring. Dr. Rogers is an assistant professor of Teacher Education in the College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia.